



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

ND

40234



HN SFQ5 5

KD40234



Agnes Horner  
With the love and best wishes  
of her friend  
Caroline B. Jackson.







# THE IMMANENT GOD AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

ABRAHAM W. JACKSON



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY  
*The Riverside Press, Cambridge*  
1894



KD40234



Copyright, 1889,  
By ABRAHAM W. JACKSON.

*All rights reserved.*

*The Riverside Press, Cambridge :*  
Electrotyped and Printed by H. O. Houghton & Co.

**TO THE WORSHIPPERS IN UNITY CHAPEL,**

**SANTA BARBARA.**

*Dear, far-off friends, long tried and always true,  
To whose fresh mem'ries vividly recur  
The quiet Sabbath hours, when spoken were  
These thoughts, I offer yet again to you.  
Fain would I they the severed tie renew,  
The higher pleasure yet once more confer,  
The nobler impulse yet again may stir,  
The nobler beauty bring once more to view.  
Take them, dear friends, and taking, I will feel  
For some truth here your flowers may sweeter blow;  
Out from your hills another grandeur start;  
A new sublimity your sea reveal;  
With other tenderness your stars may glow;  
All nature wear the joy of heavenly Art.*



## PREFACE.

---

One should rarely print that for which he may feel the need to apologize, and for this little volume I will offer no apology. It may be proper for me to say, however, that it comes because asked for ; that, in fact, in its publication I have simply allowed others to do what I should surely have never thought of doing. The reader must decide whether or not my modesty has wisely yielded to their confidence.

A. W. J.

AUGUSTA, MAINE, *January*, 1889.



## CONTENTS.

---

	PAGE
I. THE IMMANENT GOD . . . . .	1
II. THE UNSEARCHABLE GOD . . . . .	19
III. THE MANIFEST GOD . . . . .	37
IV. LAW, PROVIDENCE, AND PRAYER . . . . .	55
V. SATAN, OR THE GENIUS OF TRIAL . . . . .	77
VI. SELF-ABNEGATION . . . . .	99
VII. THE WAY WHERE THE LIGHT DWELLETH . . . . .	117
VIII. THE HEART'S PLEA FOR IMMORTALITY ACCEPTED . . . . .	137



# **THE IMMANENT GOD.**





## THE IMMANENT GOD.

---

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. — PSALM cxxxix. 8-10.

A HUNDRED years ago, and something more, Benjamin Franklin, surrounded by a group of French savans, remarked that he had never seen an atheist. •“Well,” replied one, “you may have that pleasure now. Every man here is an atheist.” Without stopping to refine upon language, using the word atheist in its common and general sense, we may doubt not that the answer was true. And, what is more, the remark fairly voiced the cultivated intellect of France at that time. Materialism, cold and sterile, had the field. Something of the odium that had been visited upon heresy now recoiled upon faith. At the clubs, one might be black-balled for believing in God. Disbelief reached the point of intellectual contempt; an encyclopædist declined an article upon God, as

treating of that which had no significance. The idea of God was made the buffet of gibe, and untutored profanity was surpassed by cultivated derision of his name. And what was true of France was elsewhere only less emphatically true. English Deism, if according to its mould of thought it held fast to a God, had reduced him to a practical superfluity; and if its career was wellnigh run, its frosty air still chilled the souls of men. It was only a few years after the death of Hume, and Gibbon was still living. To the observer of signs it must have seemed that France was but leading in the direction whither cultivated intellect was tending; that materialism was settling down upon the world.

We have passed through many phases of thought since then, and atheism has fought a losing fight. Not only has Theism recovered the ground it at one time seemed to have lost, but in fiercest controversy has demonstrated for all time, it would seem, that the judgments of the reason as well as the divinations of the spirit are on its side. It has declined no field, and it has fought for victory. All the intellectual forces of the day are with it. Literature in all its departments reflects it with varying warmth; philosophy, better instructed, has become the expounder of its creed; that science

which, a few years ago, looked so threatening is to-day seen to be its ally and its friend. We talk of the materialism of science, but no one knows better than the scientific thinker that materialism is, of all latter-day creeds, the shallowest, and no one is likely to repudiate it with more scorn than he. Perhaps there never was a time when the teachings of materialism were more repugnant to the cultivated mind or more clearly betokened an idiosyncrasy of intellect.

But though, after these fierce heats of controversy, the belief in God is thus firmly established, and the arguments against it were never so little persuasive, the form of that belief has changed and changed greatly. And this should be so. The deepest of all truths and the highest, what is new knowledge for, if not to enrich it, and new thought, if not to show it to us in fairer outlines?

This change, however, to the sorrow of many hearts. Even to modify a long-cherished idea is not easy; and to adapt the mind to an enlarged, refined, exalted thought of God, a larger, that is, a more refined, a more exalted thought of him than has been the wont of man, has always been somewhat painful. Among the most suggestive passages in Goethe's drama is a religious colloquy between Faust and Mar-

garet. The maiden believes in God ; the priest has told her of him. Under such guidance, with her little wisdom, she has gained such conception as she has. But the philosopher who has sailed all seas and explored all continents of thought has other conception than has the unstudied girl. She asks for his belief in God ; and in these lofty lines he makes reply :

“ Sweet one ! my meaning do not misconceive ;  
Him who dare name  
And who proclaim  
Him I believe ?  
Who that can feel  
His lips can steel  
To say, I believe him not ?  
The All-embracer,  
All-sustainer,  
Holds and sustains he not  
Thee, me, himself ?  
Lifts not the heaven its dome above ?  
Doth not the firm-set earth beneath us lie ?  
And beaming tenderly with looks of love,  
Climb not the everlasting stars on high ?  
Do I not gaze into thine eyes ?  
Nature’s impenetrable agencies,  
Are they not thronging on thy heart and brain,  
Viewless or visible to mortal ken,  
Around thee weaving their mysterious chain ?  
Fill thence thine heart, how large soe’er it be :  
And in the feeling when thou utterly art blest,  
Then call it what thou wilt, —  
Call it Bliss ! Heart ! Love ! God !  
I have no name for it.”

This, it is needless to say, is beyond the maiden; for her untutored intellect it is too refined, too ethereal by far. In the language there is a strange, sweet charm, — as with such multitudes since her day, suspicious for that very circumstance. The priest has taught her something thus; yet how unlike any lesson she has received from him; and she is troubled, scarce knowing why.

Troubled! The religious sentiment of our day is in like manner troubled, and that, let me make haste to say, not in the maiden intellects, not in the Margarets, but in the gray-haired scholars, the very Fausts themselves.

Without more introduction let me note the attitude we have come to or are coming.

Mr. John Fiske tells of the idea of God he had formed when five years of age. Pleading his example, I will tell mine, as I recall it from near the same period of life. Over my head, in the first place, was a firm-set Mosaic firmament. Reared on this was a vast oval throne, around which were troops of angels, ever in readiness to praise or serve. Beside this throne on a lower seat sat the Christ, with benignity and mercy in his look; and on the throne itself a figure of a man of vast size, with round cheeks covered with beard, sitting in imperturbable majesty surveying the world and

issuing decrees respecting it, and looking down with calm severity upon the deeds of men. This figure thus surrounded and thus employed was my childhood's God.

A child's conception, says one. Yes, a child's conception; but a child's conception of what, vastly refined and elevated, has been the working thought of the world. That thought, it is no injustice to say, has been of a being, occupant of some bright heaven, enthroned in unspeakable glory, far detached from the created world, whose laws he appoints, for whose human occupants he declares a right, decrees a justice, provides a heaven and a hell. The child's thought roughly outlines that which philosophers have meditated, theologians explained, poets have sung; yes, and saints kindled into rapture on. Calvin's arguments and Edwards's sermons and Moody's exhortations imply it. The theology that has ruled Christendom for fifteen centuries is builded on the conception of an "absentee God," a God outside of, detached from, far away from his world. Formed in another age, and thence handed on, cherished by scholars and thinkers as brave as have ever lived, there it is, the haunting, the prevailing thought.

It is comparatively easy to think; the picture is not difficult to form, perhaps difficult

not to form. Conceive a man and endow him with infinite attributes ; expand his power to omnipotence, his wisdom to omniscience, make his justice perfect, his righteousness absolute, his love eternal, and you have the picture, — that of an infinite sultan, — a supremely great, but an anthropomorphic God.

We are told of symbol, and may well confess its value. Multitudes there indeed may be who, on this high theme, cannot think without it. In this instance, however, the symbol does not symbolize, or only symbolizes what the mind must repudiate. With all tenderness and reverence be it said, this conception with thoughtful minds is becoming intolerable. At the higher altitudes of thought it is surely passing away. The metaphysician is likely in silence to ignore it ; to the man of science it is almost without meaning.

Well, what then ? The scientist's force, the metaphysician's abstraction ? Shall the majesty depart, the beauty fade, the glory dim ? No, no, good friend. Not so. Not afar off, but within thee and around thee is thy God.

From a God beyond the world we turn to a God that is in the world ; from a God after the similitude of a man, to a God of whom similitude is scarce possible, — as we say, the Immanent God. And here we mark a contrast



than which there is none wider in the thoughts of men. The Immanent God — this is a conception that has been allowed to poets and dreamers hitherto, but with which to-day science grows devout and philosophy kindles into praise. Verily, literally, and using language with studied exactness, we say that the world is not soulless, but enchanted. Verily, literally, and meaning precisely what the words import, we say the universe is a theophany. Mountains, ocean, flowery fields and blazing stars are but the visible garments of the Invisible One. As our frame is animated by the spirit within it, so is this universal frame pervaded and enchanted by the indwelling God.

“No! such a God my worship may not win  
Who lets the world about his fingers spin,  
A thing extern. My God must rule within;  
And whom I own for Father, God, Creator,  
Hold nature in Himself, Himself in nature.  
And in his kindly arms embraced, the whole  
Doth live and move by his pervading soul,”

are lines that very literally articulate this absorbing thought. Source of Beauty, Fountain of Light, Thrill of Praise, Power, Majesty, Sublimity, is he. Do I turn to the physical universe, analyze its laws and forces? The end of research, the ultimate explanation, he is there. Religion shall not be taught in our schools, we

are told. Let then geometry be discontinued ; let the volume of every science be closed. The very idea of a godless chemistry or a godless astronomy, seen in the light of this truth, is the shallowest of absurdities. Do I vault into thought's ethereal regions? Light of my understanding and unity of my mind, he is there. Do I ascend up into the heaven to which virtue and holiness invite me? Even with the thorn crowns that may be for me, peace of my conscience and joy of my soul, he is there. Do I descend into hell, go down into treachery and greed and falsity and cruelty, harbor in my mind the unholy aim, lend myself to the ignoble deed? A haunting discontent, a gnawing remorse, a shadowing horror, he is there. Am I launched upon a "sea of troubles"? Even when the waves and the billows go over me, he is there. Do I say the darkness of the grave shall cover me? a light round about me, he is there. I am trying to say what I mean, but am conscious of meaning what I cannot say.

We speak of this as the modern, the rising view. It is, indeed, but only as a rebirth in the human mind. The philosophers of the very early church, educated in the lore of Plato, according to their intellects, affirmed it. There are gleams of it in Justin Martyr; Clement of Alexandria implies it in his dis-

cussions; Origen taught it; Athanasius, chief apostle of the doctrine of the Trinity, and who should be held orthodox if anybody, lived his intellectual life in the largeness of this idea. In fact, the doctrine of the Trinity studied down to its roots, and as his subtle mind conceived it, sets forth the unity of the universe in God. The Father stood for the aboriginal deep of being; the Son for the eternal power and wisdom abroad in creation; the Holy Spirit for the union and interchange of grace between them. The result is a universe unified in God. It was with the rise of the Papacy that this view became darkened, and men gave to theology a god after the similitude of themselves. If the age of a doctrine is proof of its Orthodoxy in cherishing this, we are orthodox. Back of Calvin, back of St. Augustine, we meet our spiritual fathers in the brave and saintly thinkers who first found in Christianity a theme for philosophic contemplation. And the modern Unitarian may be nearer to the deep thought of Athanasius than are multitudes who make a banner of his creed.

Why bring forward so ethereal a thought, asks some one; a thought that by no soaring can we mount up to, and by no expansion of intellect can we grasp? Why, indeed, save that while ethereal it also is true. And how

shall it be naturalized to men's minds save as religious doctrine is constructed upon it? And here for that liberal faith we represent, boasting and self-complacency away, I may say that it stands for this vast conception. Its struggles and failures, the misunderstandings that shadow it, the misrepresentations that harry it, find their explanation very largely here, in a thought of God which the intellect must toil to grasp. There is no denying that, from the standard of the world's customary thinking, there lurk here the germs of heresy. Once saturate the mind with this view, and old forms of thought must be modified or discarded. It is a fundamental thought, and the changes it carries are revolutionary and vast.

But apart from its truth it bears to the liberal mind certain charms, which I will briefly specify.

First. As already hinted, of all worlds stretching to no matter what infinity, of all life peopling earth, sea, air, it provides a unity, — a unity, as we say, in God. Nothing is detached, nothing fortuitous; the smallest, lowest, meanest are embraced in the infinite wholeness. Pope's lines are no more poetry than doctrine :

“All are but parts of one stupendous whole,  
Whose body nature is and God the soul.”

Study the stars, study the rocks, study the worms, study anything, and if you study far enough, you come on the track of the interpreting and unifying God at last. The scholar is profane and irreverent, as he has stopped in the forms of things, and not penetrated their deeper meaning. When he comes to this, you shall find him on bended knee, and with wondering, adoring heart.

But, secondly, this thought consecrates the universe. You remember the skeptic who, pointed to the nightly sky in confutation of his skepticism, soberly shook his head and muttered, "How sad! how sad!" A mechanism merely, and how sad, indeed. Then

"Beamy the world, yet a blank all the same."

But with this Presence there is gladness on the hilltops and joy on the sea. All things are transfigured and irradiated by the Indwelling One. Wouldst thou know God? Look up: the heavens are telling his glory. Look down: the very globe is glass to his radiance. Do you fail of him in your daily walk? Then beneath the trees of Eden you should not meet him, for he is here, everywhere as there. Oh, brethren, how can you walk with irreverent feet where every sod is holy?

Thirdly. The ethical import of this view is persuasive beyond words to tell. In every act

in pursuance of it we deal not with laws merely, but at first hand with God. The power, wisdom, righteousness of the universe confront us at every turn. Wrong cannot prosper, simply because he is there and will not have it. Wickedness, as in its etymology, is weakness, for it is at cross-purposes with the eternal rectitude. Your injustice,—it is the infinite justice it must wrestle with and fall before. No man sees; but the Eternal Eye overlooks your ledger and the fraud you trace there. No man sees; but in all struggle and heroism there is he at your side.

Like the primeval Adam, most men act upon the feeling that they can hide away from God. The Divine Immanence should teach them that God is in the very covert to which they flee. Persecuted virtue cries, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" while on it is falling the benediction of the Infinite smile.

And, fourthly, it nourishes that mysticism on which devotion kindles its purest flame. These Scriptures in their loftier utterance abound in it; the seers, bards, prophets of the world, in their hours of exaltation, have seen the vision and kindled with beholding. Neither to Gerizim, O soul, needst thou go, nor yet to Jerusalem, to find him. Madame Guyon met him in prison, and communed with him as friend with

friend. And so may you and I wherever we are, when we believe in an all-enchanting God.

And why should not theology articulate the very highest that can be seen and the fairest dreamed? Why should religious thought be constructed at a lower level than prayer? Why should not reason and psalm match each other? They may, they shall, when an Immanent God is vividly and with full heart believed. Thought will vault into praise or fire into ecstasy when this truth possesses us.

Blessed are their eyes who behold the vision of divine enchantment, to whom the mountains are temples and the forests are shrines and the sods are altars. Blessed are they to whom is the consciousness of God within them and around them; in the stars his radiance, in the flowers his beauty, in life his thrill. Blessed are they who in righteousness realize the eternal smile, in sin the eternal frown, in need the eternal care, — the smile, frown, care of the ever present One. Blessed are they whom no circumstance can divorce from him, who, living, live in him; dying, die in him; who, submerged in whatever wave of trouble, reach forth the confiding hand to him whose throne is in heaven, and who walks on the sea.

Through all my sermon there have been hovering near my mind some mystic lines,

which a strange but gifted bard has sung.  
As the sermon has preached the song, let the  
song sing the sermon.

“As my soul has been dutiful  
Only to thee,  
O God most beautiful,  
Lighten thou me,  
As I swim through the dim long rollers, with eyelids uplift  
from the sea.

“Be praised and adored of us  
All in accord,  
Father and Lord of us,  
Always adored,  
The slayer and the stayer and the harper, the light of us all  
and our Lord.

“At the sound of thy lyre,  
At the touch of thy rod,  
Air quickens to fire  
By the foot of thee trod,  
The saviour and healer and singer, the living and visible God.

“The years are before thee  
As shadows of thee,  
As men that adore thee,  
As cloudlets that flee;  
But thou art the God, and thy kingdom is heaven, and thy  
shrine is the sea.”





# **THE UNSEARCHABLE GOD.**



## THE UNSEARCHABLE GOD.

---

Canst thou by searching find out God? — JOB xi. 7.

THE question we may suppose to be of the nature of a challenge; and what is more, a challenge it is not believed will be accepted. In it Zophar throws down a gauntlet he is entirely sure the suffering Job will not take up, the very weight of which shall call him home to his impotence. And Job does not take it up. In his after talk he passes the question by, though not as one by which his intellect is appalled, but as one he has weighed and to which his mind is adjusted.

Observe that there is no flavor of skepticism in this question, nothing of doubt. In the attitude of his mind the questioner is contemplating a fact greater than he can comprehend, greater than he believes can be comprehended, but which he yet doubts not to be a fact. "It is high as heaven," he goes on to say, "what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst

thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea." And thus the Bible writers in their loftier utterances are wont to speak. The Psalmist says, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain unto it;" and though clearly enough he sees that "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne," yet are "clouds and darkness round about him." Job confesses, "I uttered that I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not." Isaiah affirms that there is "no searching of his understanding." Paul exclaims, "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." And to like tenor have been the utterances of the great religious teachers when they have soared the highest or explored the deepest. St. Augustine in his "Confessions" writes of the "most hidden, yet most present; most beautiful, yet most strong; stable, yet incomprehensible; unchangeable, yet all-changing; never new, never old; ever working, ever at rest; still gathering, yet not lacking; seeking, yet having all things." And so through a long series of contradictions celebrating him who is an impossibility of thought. John Henry Newman tells of one who is "all-powerful, all-knowing, omnipresent, incomprehensible." Hooker, the

English theologian of the sixteenth century, wrote: "It is dangerous for the feeble brain of man to wade into the doings of the Most High, whom, although to know be life, and joy to make mention of his name; yet our soundest knowledge is to know that we know him not, as indeed he is, neither can know him."

And the doctrine of the Incarnation which these many centuries the wisest and saintliest have taken to their bosoms, stands in the foreground of this truth and is of it: God in his eternal essence not to be known, but made manifest in the Son of Man. And with all this how far dissonant are these words of Herbert Spencer: "The scientific man more truly than any other knows that nothing in its essence can be known."

Thus it is clear that it was not left for our day to invent the doctrine of the Unknowable; that science is not to be charged with it, or by any priority of title receive credit for it. It beamed upon the first seer that ever looked; the thinkers and bards of the ages have published it. The Scriptures Old and New, the philosophy, theology, and poetry of Christendom, reflect it in various warmth from their multifarious page.

Nevertheless, when a few years ago it was announced as the fundamental postulate of a

new philosophy, the surprise and alarm that greeted it showed how far men in the temper of their minds had disowned it. Possibly there was something bodeful in the earlier tone of that philosophy. Certainly in the way in which it was caught up and echoed by multitudes who had wit enough thoroughly to misunderstand it, there was something disturbing. But that the thoughtful and the learned, especially the learned in these Scriptures, should have been so discomfited by the cardinal idea is something to be accounted for. And the way I would account for it should be by taking reckoning of that spirit of dogmatism that had so long prevailed. Men were on terms with Deity too easy and comfortable by far. They had gained a knowledge of his attributes that was too confident; his plans were too clearly laid open to them; his motives they understood too well. Long dwelling in definite forms of thought had given the Deity an outline too fixed, a form too distinct. When, therefore, the word was spoken that said in effect, Of the infinite wholeness yours can be but finite and imperfect glimpses; in the nature of things these conceptions can furnish no adequate picture of one who is infinitely more than all can conceive; to your vision is an effulgence, not the Bright One whence it comes, — the long

habit of mind was jostled and offended. We are coming to see that the offense was to good purpose. The condition of mind we had settled down to is not favorable to that sense of wonder and mystery from which religion at its fairest can never be divorced. And to this new philosophy we may well be grateful if it compel us to turn our minds to the Unknowable; that is to say, the Unsearchable; that is to say, the Unfindable; that is to say, the Transcendent, the Infinite and Eternal God.

The Unsearchable God; present yet unseen, divined yet unknown. A certainty, we may say; but a certainty whereof who inquires most in the humility of baffled search shall assuredly have least to tell!

Yet the search goes on — from the instincts of the mind it must, so restless and insatiable. By all its instrumentalities it bends itself to the ever baffled, the never abandoned, the un-abandonable quest. One after another, explorers go forth, and they return rich in observation, but all with one report, "I could not find him."

With fine equipment and with eager spirit science undertakes the quest.<sup>1</sup> She scales the mountains and explores the deep, ransacks the

<sup>1</sup> For the suggestion of the following illustrations, though not aware of it when I wrote, I am sure I must be indebted to



earth, deciphers hieroglyph after hieroglyph that records its history, plunges into the ooze of the primeval world, delves in atoms, analyzes forces ; she vaults into the heavens and, traversing planet and sun and star, she sweeps the eternal spaces with her scrutiny ; but in the end is compelled to say, " I fail. In my subtle analyses I find molecules ; but beneath them is a finer something to which my chemistry is not equal. I find life, but track it as I will, I come not to its everflowing spring. There was a footprint in the snow, but I saw not the form that passed, and follow as I would, my feet were heavy that they might not overtake him. There was a shadow, but I found not the sun behind ; I swam in light, but discovered not the orb whence it came. An effulgence I saw, a brightness, that it seemed must clothe him ; but him I could not distinguish. Everywhere I found law, everywhere order ; but look as I would I could see nothing of the great white throne and him who sits thereon. Hints of him, traces of him, signs and tokens manifold, enough that implies him, but him could not I find."

Philosophy undertakes the quest. One after O. B. Frothingham's little volume, *The Religion of Humanity*. See chapter on God.

" And when the author of a good we know,  
Let us not fail to pay the debt we owe."

another she opens the chambers of the mind ; she taps at the door of the soul and gains admittance there. Even to its very shrine she dares to come. " Surely he must be here," she says ; and by manifest tokens she may well be confident he is there. But the form is too ethereal even for her fine eye, and her search is baffled.

With confidence still undaunted she looks out upon the universe. " There is design here," she says ; " surely there must be a designer, and if I follow on his track I will come to him." And certainly it would seem that philosophy must be right here. Design and designer, creature and creator, the made thing and the maker, seem inseparable thoughts. Somebody designed " Hamlet," did there not ? Somebody with thinking brain and organizing purpose wrote it. Was it Shakespeare ? Well, then, who wrote Shakespeare ? Who designed Hamlet's designer ? Who dramatized the dramatist ? Who poetized the poet ? Who devised the molecules of his brain, put them together, and endowed them with their cunning ? " Without phosphorus no thought," said once a scientific fool. Who endowed the phosphorus with its subtle potency ? Account for this. A few questions like these, and philosophy in all her pride must confess, " I uttered that I understood not, things too wonderful for me which I knew not."

Conscience, with reason for companion and counsellor, goes forth upon the search. Life is her field, the moral law her clue. She finds her satisfactions and is of good hope. Virtue, heroism, how they dignify and honor! Won at whatever expenditure, their sufficing reward always with them. Vice scourges its votaries, and she would have it so; greed strangles itself; wrong, in whatever form, works its own overthrow at last, at last. The laws and forces of nature are in league with virtue. Ignorance, profligacy, through all their wretchedness and horror, wail the eternal decalogue they violate; suffering truth, painful duty, thorn-crowned love in their simple blessedness chant the beatitudes of promise. All this she sees, and exultingly cries: "These are tokens of the very Lord of Righteousness; by this way will I come to him." Anon, however, another order of facts confronts her. She takes note of the vagrant and unpitied child; she marks the deep tincture of hereditary stain; she confronts unbalanced, unrequited wrong, and in the presence of the terrible contradiction she sadly says: "I am baffled; I believe, but I cannot find."

Last of all the spirit undertakes the quest. Aspiration furnishes her wings; faith gives her vision; in some high hour she mounts up and

soars away. Earth and its conditions are escaped; sun, moon, and stars are forgot; space is not to her; time is not. She enters into realms eternal; visions of beauty open to her; light ineffable floods her. "Surely," she says, "he must be here;" but even there the Form of Glory is not for her beholding. There is an effulgence, but the Bright One is not there; there is a voice sweeter than music and "softer than silence," but it floats as on a more celestial ether, and turn as she will, the soul can catch no glimpse of the lips through which that voice comes to her; and after her bravest endeavor must she say:

"I cannot find thee. Still on restless pinion,  
My spirit beats the void where thou dost dwell;  
I wander lost through all thy vast dominion,  
And shrink beneath thy light ineffable.

"I cannot find thee. Even when most adoring,  
Before thy shrine I bend in lowliest prayer,  
Beyond these bounds of thought, my thought upsoaring,  
From farthest quest comes back: thou art not there.

"Yet high above the limits of my seeing,  
And folded far within the inmost heart,  
And deep below the deeps of conscious being,  
Thy splendor shineth: there, O God, thou art."

Well, what then? An unsearchable God, what good of him? A God we cannot know is to us no God, multitudes beyond number would make reply.

Perhaps such thought has risen in your minds. Let me, therefore, for a moment wrestle with it.

And first, I will meet your demurrer, not with contradiction, but with inversion. A God I could find — a known God — would be no God; a God that I can find, that I can know, that I can prove, I must bring within the range and measurement of my faculties, and then he were no God. To be God he must transcend me, at an infinite distance, however high I soar. We say he is infinite and eternal, and those very terms confess him unknowable. If infinite he is infinitely near, and infinitely beyond us whichever way we turn.

The skeptic meets me with the objection, "You cannot prove there is a God." Thank you, good sir, for your kind assurance; but I never thought to try. But are you aware that thousands of years before some fool gave you lessons in unwisdom, that you affirm was known and reverently accepted; that David knew it and Job and Isaiah, and took it gratefully to their bosoms? that the sages and bards of Greece and Egypt and India knew it and kindled upon it? that in all time since, the wise and devout have seen in it the deep guarantee of their faith? In vain your speech if you supposed that this was news, or if you thought to

topple down my temple by calling attention to the central pillar underneath it. My faith is not the issue of a syllogism. Enough for my assurance, the intangible but ever haunting Presence. Well pleased am I with this

"Sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air  
And the blue sky."

Well pleased with these monitions in my breast, which,

"Be they what they may,  
Are still the fountain light of all our day,  
The master light of all our seeing."

And I go my way, meekly following in the footsteps of the great devout, who have reared their altars and chanted their praises to a God whom it surpasses the human faculties to prove.

But, secondly, the unknown is the mysterious, and of mystery is wonder born and awe and uplooking reverence. Religion's nobler sentiments are quickened at the altar of the unknown God. You say my conceptions of God are indefinite and vague. Truer thus, I reply, and likewise healthier, and therefore I would keep them so, and make them less definite as my mind is able. Define God? The Enchanting Presence, the Shoreless Deep, the

Eternal Fount, whence all power and love and beauty flow, is the best that I can say. But here is no definition at all, you say, and I agree with you; simply phrases these, thrown out to describe an object of thought too vast to define. I do not disdain the customary terms by which he is spoken of. With glad spirit I take upon my lips the sweet and tender "Our Father." But all these terms represent to us in some single aspect a being who demands of us the homage of the whole mind and heart. The best of them and all together tell us infinitely less than all, and it is to the All that I would look and dedicate the temple of my praise. It is at that altar that I feel that the spirit descends with most ennobling thrills.

Once in a church where it was my fortune to worship of a Sunday morning, the minister introduced his service with the easy and nonchalant "Good-morning, Lord." I doubt if I am severely exacting as to the proprieties of worship, yet profanity on the street could hardly have offended my spirit more. Whoever stands consciously in the presence of the Majesty of the Universe will not offer the salutation appropriate to his neighbor. And often when I listen to talk of God, the analyses of his nature, the dogmatic assertion of his ways, I am

tempted to say : "Oh men, if you knew him less, how much better would you know him." These sharp outlines, these so definite and assured statements, the worshipful heart does not kindle on them. In the Middle Ages, for purposes of religious instruction, the priests brought the Passion Play upon the stage, in which God appeared, a venerable gray-beard gentleman, and was treated with a familiarity that would shock the irreverence of to-day. Nothing irreverent was intended. But refine motive to the last degree, and I cannot believe the spectacle was edifying. It gave men an image for their minds too definite to call forth wonder. But we are told that this vastness does not take hold on men. Are you quite sure of that? There are the near and tender relations with God which the heart asks for and has. Yet for all men, not a few, is the "High and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy." Nature gives us the fruit of the field, the warmth of sunshine, the gladness of flowers; but here also are the mountains with their grandeur, the seas with their sublimity; under our feet the earth, with its magazine of wonders; over our heads the heavens, with their eternal depths and infinite mystery of stars. What life could be divorced from contact with this mystery and



wonder, nor suffer from its loss? The little and ignorant may be but feebly conscious of the charm above them and around them. Only the philosopher can give account for it; only the poet can sing it. But the smallest life losing this constant appeal would shrivel into something smaller still. So of God as the Infinite and Unknown, the poorest, bereaved of the contemplation, should suffer to untold degree. This perpetual challenge of his wonder makes something less of earth its meanest child. Tell then the foolish as the wise of the Unknown God. "Say he is the abyss how deep; say he is the heaven how high."

Thought pushed only a little farther should show that the conception of the heavenly care and compassion is involved in that of the Unknowable One, and must blossom out of it. Some divine affirms that man only asks a Father. That may be. But while he only asks a Father, he asks that that Father shall be an Infinite God. Only out of this impossible conception can come that of the Universal Fatherhood we ask for. The argument let the sweet lines of William Faber furnish:

"O Majesty Unspeakable and dread!

Wert thou less mighty than thou art,

Thou wert, O Lord, too great for our belief,

Too little for our heart.

"Thy greatness would seem monstrous by the side  
Of creatures frail and undivine.  
Yet they would have a greatness of their own,  
Free and apart from thine.

. . . . .

"But greatness, which is infinite, makes room  
For all things in its lap to lie;  
We should be crushed by a magnificence  
Short of infinity.

. . . . .

"But what is infinite must be a home,  
A shelter for the meanest life;  
Where it is free to reach its greatest growth  
Far from the touch of strife."



# **THE MANIFEST GOD.**



## THE MANIFEST GOD.

---

Thou hast beset me behind and before. — **PSALM cxxxiv. 5.**

**THERE** are certain texts scattered through the Bible, and all sacred literatures, as for that matter, have such, which affirm or imply very definite relations with God; and what is more, they imply that man is conscious of these relations, and, in a certain sense, knows God through them. The verse that introduces the wonderful twenty-third psalm is one of these. "The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want." Into the green pastures, beside the still waters he leadeth me. The plaintive cry, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I," is another. Also the high assurance, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Also that which utters the sublime faith of Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Then there is a prayer, the first our lips were taught to lisp, and very likely the last they will articulate, "Our Father who art in heaven." And so we might quote

till to-morrow's sunrise nor have done — texts that celebrate an infinite sympathy and care ; other texts, too, many hundreds of them, celebrating a righteousness that rules and a wisdom that guides. Very different these in the impression they leave upon the mind from the "High and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy." Very different from the language of Job: "Oh that I knew where I might find him ! Behold, I go forward, but he is not there ; and backward, but I cannot perceive him ; on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him : he hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him." Very different from, "Clouds and darkness are round about him ; justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Very different from the thousand texts that shroud the Deity in fathomless mystery. And very, very different from Spencer's "Infinite and Eternal Energy ;" very different from Matthew Arnold's "Stream of Tendency ;" very different from "the Eternal not ourselves that makes for righteousness," of Matthew Arnold again. I do not say they contradict this vaguer, vaster thought ; I do say they lead to one very different from it, and the one, too, that has most charmed the hearts of men. The two classes of texts may fairly be conceived to supplement each other,

the one bringing the contemplation of the eternal mystery — the infinite unknown — to our minds immeasurably wholesome ; the other seeming to say that of the unsearchable something has been found, of the unknowable something is known. Little it may be, compared with all, but something. The eternal deep, which even thought cannot wing, rolls its wave upon the shores of time and into the creeks and inlets of our lives. And thus we find it prevailing in the thought of men. And this brings me to the last point in my three Sundays' sermon, — the Manifest God.

The manifest, the known. For controversy I have no liking ; yet I cannot utter these words and not remember that there are those who would offer them challenge ; and the challenge I cannot pass unheeded. The thought of recent years has brought many minds to the conviction that of the divine nature nothing can be known by the human, that is to say, there is such a creed as agnosticism. The agnostics assume not to deny that the source or soul of things is intelligent, righteous, benevolent. They simply say, we cannot see ; we do not know ; the human faculties cannot penetrate so deep ; we are simply in the presence of an all-embracing mystery of which it is impossible to affirm this or that. It is not to be over-



looked that the creed of agnosticism has various shadings; and it is only fair to represent it as it has taken form in more conservative and reverent minds. And, taking estimate from these, he must be a most ultra opponent who will deny that it has taught many things it has been good and wholesome for us to learn. And though I do not believe it to be a final word or fundamentally a true word, yet when the history of the thought of our time is written, I believe it will be seen to have exercised a corrective influence of no small importance. It has tended to foster in man that sense of mystery which our dogmatisms were effacing, and which, as religious beings, we lose only to our harm.

But what is the basis of the agnostic's argument? This, as I understand him. The faculties of man reach only to the relative, not to the absolute. They take hold on the phenomenal, not the reality that underlies phenomena. Manifestation is their field; the thing that is manifest, in philosophical phrase the thing in itself, is beyond their grasp. They can take in something of the ocean, the buoyancy of its water, its undulating waves, its currents, its tides, its storms; but not the calm of its impenetrable depths. They can take in something of the sun, its heat, its light; but not the mystery of its burning core. How much less can they

lay hold upon the mystery of mysteries, spring of the ocean and source of the sun, out of which intelligence arises and life is born, — of all things that are, the shaping, energizing, and vitalizing soul. To that ultimate fact, they tell us, our faculties may not reach. We may form our conceptions of it, indeed; but we are told that we must hold these conceptions as symbolic merely; true of our minds and the impression made upon them, but not necessarily true of whatever or whoever is the soul of things. Him, if we may say him, we may think of as wise; but at the same time we are taught to remember that wisdom in him and in us may bear no character in common. We may say he is righteous, but we are required to bear in mind that between righteousness in us and in him there may be no similarity. We may say he is benevolent, only remembering that benevolence is our thought and not necessarily his attribute. Something thus does the argument proceed. The finite may not lay hold upon the infinite; the ephemeral may not speak of the eternal. Cease, vain pretense! Vain speech, be still!

And what answer? Others may give theirs, here is mine. Admit the prescribed limitation of the human faculties, that it is only the phenomenal they can grasp; magnify as you will

the mystery ; still as a necessity of thought I plead that manifestation must be a clue to the thing or being that is manifest. The system of things is a gigantic delusion otherwise ; nay, knowledge fails and intellectual paralysis is the result if this doctrine be not true. How will you say you know your friend, even the wife you cherish ? All you can say is that the acts of her life, her interests, sympathies, affections, reveal her. The interior of every human life, as really as of the universe, is enfolded in mystery. There is a deep in every soul which none but the Eternal Eye can penetrate. But as we come in contact with the nature, live near it, observe it, study it, something of it surely is made plain. The wise designs, the offices of kindness, the patience, forbearance, tenderness, sacrifice, reveal to us not wholly, but in some measure the deepest deep of the spirit. There cannot be perpetual contradiction between the manifestations of the life and the springs of the heart. Acts translate feelings ; conduct reveals motives ; deeds show whether the gravity of the nature is towards heaven or towards hell. It must be that the deeps of the spirit are shown in the true woman's truth and the just man's justice ; otherwise moral judgment were confounded, were impossible. So of this vast system of things, it must be that the laws

and forces, all its phenomena, when understood reveal their indwelling spirit. There is no unity otherwise.

Here then it stands. The phenomenal reveals the reality that is behind phenomena. The manifestation is a clue to the being that is manifest. In the former the latter is made known to me. Admit this, and agnosticism is at an end ; deny it, and intellectual chaos has come. Thus, with all candor and modesty, it seems to me.

When told therefore that we can know nothing of God, a legitimate answer would seem to be, There is nothing else of which I can know as much. All knowledge at last is knowledge of him.

But let us press a little farther. To those Scriptures that celebrate the Unsearchable, the High and Holy One, that lead the mind not so much to thought as to reverie, my Bible, I think, is most likely to open of its own accord. Those philosophical abstractions, too, the "Infinite and Eternal Energy," the "Stream of Tendency," the "Eternal not Ourselves that makes for Righteousness," I meet with no rebellious spirit. At best, however, they are formulas in which all truth may be embraced, vast abstractions and from very vastness vague ; and something within us turns from them to the

mind's more concrete and special interests. An Infinite and Eternal Energy, tell me in simple speech, does this mean a being in whom all wisdom is? In any sense in which language can have meaning to me, does it give us at the soul of things a being that can know? Certainly it would seem as though this must be implied. No great subtlety of intellect should be required to see that only the *involved* can be *evolved*. Is mind as we know it, mind in man, an exotic in the universe? But look about you. To vary the Scripture by a word: He that formed the ear, did he not hear? He that formed the eye, did he not see? There seems to be intelligence in the system of things. Arguments from design are clumsy in their way; but the presence of mind in nature, the infinite adaptation of part to part, the intelligent arrangement of all things would declare. A telescope, you at once affirm, shows a fashioning intelligence. Does that far more complex and wonderful instrument, the human eye, show no intelligence? The telephone is no chance affair; of that you are absolutely sure. Is, then, that intricate and sensitive organism, the human ear? The book before you is no product of blind forces. Is the brain that reads it? Do order and adaptation so surely point to a superintending mind in the works of

man, and do they declare none in works that are infinitely beyond him? You tell me of natural selection, and I believe it well. But are you aware that the severest and most uncompromising champions of that doctrine in the presence of the facts of nature, let alone the supreme facts of their own intelligence, are affirming a natural selector, the Immanent One present in every fragment of his world, superintending as really the sprouting of a clover seed as the rolling of a star? Natural selection as a merely blind and mechanical force is the crudeness of yesterday, not the mature wisdom and deep thought of to-day.

Is there righteousness here? This Stream of Tendency — of the multitude of things it may imply, is righteousness surely one? In all their scope, to justify the ways of God to man is no easy task. But if optimism be difficult, pessimism is impossible. The law of the Lord is perfect, says the Scripture; and alike the punishments of disobedience, and the rewards of obedience, approve it so. You see drunkenness; does drunkenness promote welfare? lewdness; is health born of it? falsity; does any real and continuous prosperity come of it? indolence, greed, hypocrisy, cruelty; does happiness bloom of them? Does not all vice deprave, all wrong stab at welfare? Does any-

thing like injustice jeopardize the social organism? Does man ever depart from the law of the Lord and not find it ill with him? And on the other hand, does not purity clothe with comeliness? Does not self-denial strengthen, heroism ennoble, charity beautify, self-sacrifice crown? Is not honor essential to the fairer good, and justice to the larger welfare? For any man will you ask better guarantee for his nobler welfare than the stipulation that he shall turn to the laws of the universe with obedient and reverent mind?

Is there benevolence here? The Eternal not Ourselves that makes for Righteousness, makes he in love? Sad for us if we must say otherwise.

"For a loving worm within its clod,  
Were diviner than a loveless God."

But must we say he is loveless? The tough questions with which you might inundate me are not forgotten; but in the name of benevolence what will you ask of the Supreme Power? Sunny days on which no clouds gather, tranquil nights of unbroken slumber? ever a guarantee that your enterprise shall prosper, loss impossible, and gain secure? if with seas to traverse, no storms to buffet; if with mountains to climb, the feet unwearied? harvest as certain as the seed-time, and with-

out taxed endeavor, treasure full and no moth or rust? health, with no possible disease to teach its blessing? domestic joy, with none of its shadowing ills, painless maternity and unanxious motherhood, blooming children and no weeping Rachel? a felicity to-day, for which to-morrow shrouds no peril, son or daughter wandering forth and no solicitude for a danger that may have spread its ambush? love steadfast until death, which at threescore and ten shall gently bear away and leave no sorrow on the widowed heart? Granted such condition, will you say the demand upon an Infinite Benevolence is satisfied? Were such condition best for you who are not an animal, for mankind, — not a vegetable? Best for a being with will to subdue, moral powers to develop, intelligence to foster, affections to nourish and call forth? No, no! The most indolent and irresolute of us all would not say of such condition that it is best. The very thought of it is sickening. Give us water in which we must drown or swim, but not honey, which shall be but a quagmire sweet.

The happiness which follows from the healthy exercise of all natural functions, we see and rejoice in. Animalism is happy; intellect, conscience, the affections happy. Yet beyond what it is our want to call happiness, in the



provision for what we may call blessedness may we see the hand of the Infinite Benevolence. If pleasure's sweet we ask, in our healthier and saner moods we ask also the experience that shall educate and the discipline that shall ennoble. We would limit the pleasure by this high requirement, and in the limitation say it is best for us. If we ask success in our enterprises, we will not ask exemption from the taxed endeavor, that the consequences of our mistakes shall be remitted, that our faults shall involve no penalty. In that our endeavors are taxed, in that our mistakes are not remitted, and that our wrongs come back to us, we see that it is best for us. We ask health, and that the laws of nature shall be favorable to that, but not when we depart from them and insult them. In that they cannot in any safety be insulted, we say it is best for us. We ask for happy relations with our fellows, pleasant intimacies with our neighbors, to be trusted, esteemed, and honored; but not if ours be the slanderer's tongue, or the swindler's craft, or the deceiver's smile. In that with these we forfeit esteem and cannot be trusted, we say it is best for us. We ask for these related joys, these human ties, heart knit to heart; we will not ask reprieve from the solitudes by which these ties are preserved, least of all give over

the sacred privilege of the mourner's sorrow, or ask not to follow the dear and vanished with up-reaching, yearning heart. In that while love is given, anxieties foster it and death sanctifies it, we say it is best for us.

Thus traversing the circuit of experience with mind intent not upon the happiness merely, but the blessedness of man, encountering many a mystery we cannot fathom, we yet find good reason for the conviction that the world we live in is such as we would ask the Infinite Benevolence to give.

But is there personality here? Personality is a word which multitudes use with dim idea as to what it means, I apprehend. Man, you say, is a person; but you never call a beast such. Your neighbor, day before yesterday, was a person; but he died yesterday, and it is a corpse, not a person, that you will carry to the grave to-morrow. Intellect, righteousness, benevolence, are they not, or do they not imply the attributes that enter into what you conceive as a person? Are *things* intelligent, are *things* righteous, are *things* benevolent? For my own part I know not how to believe these at the soul of things and erect my altar to any other than a personal God.

"But," says my agnostic friend, "you are using language that is symbolic merely. How

can you make your thought the measure of the infinite?" That I do not do. I bow submissively when I am reminded that as the heavens are high above the earth so are his thoughts higher than our thoughts. "But in the depths of his eternal nature how may you affirm that intelligence can in any sense be like intelligence in you?" Simply because in the manifestation it is so; and just so of righteousness and benevolence likewise. Say that in him they are infinitely beyond what they are in me, there with reverent heart I bow. But though infinitely beyond mine, mine may be embraced in his. The chief difficulty with our agnostic thinker, as it seems to me, is that he confounds essence with magnitude. He seems to teach that where we cannot comprehend we can know nothing. To know all about the humblest flower would imply, perhaps, an angel's faculties; but do I know nothing of it? There is mystery about the simplest functions of animal existence; I cannot comprehend them; but may I not have some knowledge of them? Yonder ocean, with its vast expanse, its fathomless depths,—the ratio of my knowledge of it to the whole that may be learned, not to mention the unsearchable that cannot be learned of it, is small indeed; yet something of it I do surely know. I know something of what

thought is in the vast brain of Herbert Spencer, though I cannot fathom all its depths. I cannot conceive the infinitude of God's wisdom and care; but I can feel something of them. Always an infinitely beyond, always a measureless more, but at least this. The dewdrop epitomizes the ocean; the single ray of light brings knowledge of the far-off sun.

The wise, the righteous, and the good; the being that is all these and infinitely more, nay, in these attributes infinitely beyond our bravest conception, infinitely wiser than our thought, infinitely better than our dream, the unknown in the boundless amplitude of his nature, the known in his nearness; a brooding mystery and an encircling care, a hearthfire and a dome of stars, — such is our thought of him.

It is a time when we are dealing with abstractions, seeking thereby to rationalize our faith. Needful are they in the formal processes of thought, yet how cold they seem! Needful, indispensable; yet let us bear in memory that they but utter the mind, they do not articulate the heart. The heart has yet another argument to make and another dialect it will not fail to use. Whatever satisfaction to the mind in the vast and vague, it is the near and tender and gracious that the heart demands.

I have sometimes thought of these abstrac-

tions, and what had been the religious history of mankind had they alone given color and tone to religious thought? Had any confiding breast put forth the assurance, Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Unknowable pitieth them that fear him? Had any grateful spirit sung, The Infinite and Eternal Energy is my shepherd, I shall not want? Had any oracular lip taught, Our Eternal that art in heaven? Had any wrestling, sorrowing one prayed, O Stream of Tendency, if this cup may not pass away except I drink it, thy will be done? From any agonizing form had there escaped the cry, Eternal not Ourselves that makes for Righteousness, into thy hands I commend my spirit? No, no; the abstraction may do for the intellect, but the heart finds satisfaction only in the heavenly yet present friend.

And as life not less than nature is manifestation of the eternal, who shall deny to the heart its wisdom in enthroning the fairest it conceives? Does sunshine reveal God and not a mother's love? gravity, and not the hero's heart and the martyr's consecration? Do the heavens declare him, and not virtue thorn-crowned and triumphant? While we offer our ascriptions to the "King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only wise God," shall we not dare to pray, Our Father which art in heaven?

# **LAW, PROVIDENCE, AND PRAYER.**



## LAW, PROVIDENCE, AND PRAYER.

---

The law of the Lord is perfect. — **PSALM xix. 7.**

Neither be ye of a doubtful mind. — **LUKE xii. 29.**

THE ruling thought of our day is of law. Not the lettered only, not alone the scientifically wise, but the unlettered, those whose minds the light of science has scarce penetrated, take the word upon their lips with a certain confidence that it is the key to all mystery, the explanation of all things difficult. Even in my day, which is not yet very protracted, a change language can scarce measure has come to the general thinking on this theme. The domain of law has been extended so as to take in immeasurable sweeps not dreamed of in my boyhood ; a constancy, an unvariableness have been attributed to it that would have shocked the piety of thirty years ago. Then it was agreed that the more apparent movements of nature are governed by law ; that the planets spin in their orbits, that the sun rises and sets, that the rivers run in their channels, that the tides ebb



and flow in accordance with law ; though that that law is essentially and absolutely unvarying, that it cannot be set aside, that it is never annulled, is a proposition that religion would have recoiled from, and theology fiercely challenged. To-day you perhaps could not find a man of any scientific culture, you would find few of any culture whatever, who would deny the truth of this proposition. Law, we say without hesitation or misgiving, is omnipresent and universal. The winds that seem so fickle have their courses appointed them by law. Not a sunbeam darts through space but has its track provided it by law. The stones on your hills are laid each in its place by law. The dust, that of a summer's day blows through your street, is held in the fine leashes of law. The flight of birds, the swarming of insects, are regulated by law. The worm, the grasshopper, the moth, rust, weevil, come in obedience to law. Disease, the pestilence that walketh by noonday, visits us by appointment of law. Species of animals appear upon the earth and depart from it, man himself, the lordly ruler of the planet, in accordance with law. There are laws of the intellect ; we think by law. Even the will, that seems so capricious, is over-arched by law. Society is organized, history is shaped, by law. Customs, institutions, wars,

crimes, religions, have their law. Christianity, nay, the Christ himself, his coming and career, — who is the theologian so bold as to affirm that in no sense were they regulated by law? The wonders of the Old Testament, — the parting of the Red Sea wave, the sun standing still at command of Joshua, devout expositors shall deny to be in contradiction of law. The miracles of the New Testament are prevailingly treated as golden beads strung upon a thread of law, though law the keen eye of science cannot see. Everything is as it is through the operation of law. We cannot turn to any period of history or any point in our experience, to any loss or pain, or blessing, and say: Law is not here. Such is the thought of to-day, which as time goes on seems likely to grow only more assured.

This conception of the universality of law, however, has not been received without protest. In a universe everywhere and absolutely law-governed, what space for Providence? This is a question men have asked and are asking. If law be everywhere, is Providence anywhere? To many minds law and Providence seem mutually to exclude each other.

The seriousness of this perplexity appears when we reflect on the place which Providence has in religion, how dear is the thought of it to

the human heart! Religion in the sense that calls forth sacrifice, prayer, worship, might be said to begin with the conception of Providence; nay, more, to run its career with it. We might go so far as to doubt whether religion in this sense could long survive the displacement of this thought. Man in his need looks up, and supplicates a power he believes can bring him succor. In his gratitude he offers his thanksgiving only to a beneficence he believes has blessed him. All his praise takes meaning from the conviction that there is one above him who makes rightful requisition for it. All our ideas of God, as any other than a dreary abstraction, presuppose a Providence, through which he comes in contact with His creatures. Take away this, and the intellect were bereaved of its grandest thought, and the heart of its fairest hope.

And yet with all this to be said on the side of Providence, how superficial often seems its hold even upon those who most zealously believe it! The Lord will direct, we say; the Lord will take care. Yet when the emergency is at hand, when the peril is near and the need is pressing, we are likely to forget this brave assurance. In her "Recollections," Mary Somerville tells an anecdote of her mother, a devout woman. It was necessary for her to

cross from England over to Scotland by water, though she was distrustful of the sea. The passage was rough, and the captain, willing to tease her, sent her word that the time had come when they must put their trust in Providence. "Why, mercy, has it come to that!" exclaimed the terrified lady. Multitudes in the like extremity would hardly do better. Were a steamboat to go to pieces in a storm, the most trusting of you all, if on board, would pay dear for a life-preserver. In one of his journeys Mohammed dismounted from his steed to press on his way on foot. An attendant asked him if they should leave the horses with Providence. "Yes," answered the Prophet, "but I think you had better hitch them first." And certainly the most of us, with all our Christian confidence, would adopt a like precaution. We are in the hands of Providence, we say; yet in sickness we take a good deal of disagreeable medicine, or submit to very painful surgery. The Lord will take care; yet ere we lie down at night we bar our doors and make fast our windows; for if there be a Providence, there are burglars also. The Lord will provide; yet many of us tax ourselves heavily for life insurance that our wives and children need not want if we are taken from them. And what is more, common sense and common experience

justify our course. The man who, from trust in Providence, should neglect the ordinary means of cure in sickness, or of security in health, or of provision for his future, would not so much win esteem for his piety as contempt for his folly. Yet, nevertheless, in the face of all this contradiction, man has a deep and abiding faith in Providence; and it is the inspiration of all his noblest endeavor.

Now, what shall we do with these considerations which we have set over against each other, law and Providence? Must they who believe in Providence be without law? must they who believe in law be without Providence? Must there be some province of human life that is lawless that Providence may have scope? Must another province of human life be without Providence that law may execute its decrees? Must Providence be lawless? Must law be loveless? No. All we need to do is to see that law is providential, and Providence according to law, and the contradiction vanishes.

According to this view, law is the method of divine action, nothing colder, nothing harder than that.

The law of science is the Providence of religion. And the change this conception brings to our habitual thought is this: It takes away

the aspect of coldness and purposelessness from law and gives it warmth and aim. Even when it seems to bruise, as a method of divine action, we may at least believe it kind. A lady some time ago had lost a child. Talking with a minister about it, he casually said something about the laws of nature. "Oh," said she, "those dreadful laws!" She was a woman of intelligence, a church-member of devout mind and upreaching heart. Yet *she* put forth that pessimistic wail. The ways of Divine Wisdom dreadful! And her case illustrates that of multitudes beyond number to whom these environing laws on their sterner side seem a frowning fatalism. They believe in a God behind them, but not in them and working through them. They are waiting for the light by which to see that in every law they have to deal with an Immanent Love. And while this view takes the coldness out of law, it brings a corresponding change to the idea of Providence. Bound up with law, and working through it, it becomes constant and calculable, not now and then and here and there, but always and everywhere. And here ends the dispute as to general and special Providence. Because general, of course special; general to the race, yet special to the individual man, just as the light that bathes the world in glory streams in spe-

cial rays into the eyes of every worm and spider, just as the law of gravity is general to the solar system, yet provides a special orbit each for Mars and Uranus, and guides the lonely and erratic comet in its unimaginable hyperbola. It is the view that consecrates the universe that gives us right to sing:

" Yes, for me, for me He careth,  
With a father's tender care."

This view I am sure must clear away some of the fogs that have hovered over this theme. Law, the method of Divine Intelligence, the effluence of Infinite Power, directed by Infinite Wisdom, ruled by Infinite Righteousness, God behind it, God within it, gives us a Providence with which intellect and soul may alike be satisfied. Constant with the constancy of law; unvarying,— why should the Perfect vary? Why should the infinite wisdom of God give place to the infinite unwisdom of man?

What the thought of man has long put asunder, the Immanent God joins together. But to what practical gain to us? This: This Providence according to law, — we live in its unre-laxing embrace. The wisdom of the universe we confront at every turn, the righteousness of the universe we deal with in every deed; the love of the universe we cannot spurn away. Even in our perversity and sin this Providence

holds fast to us as the sun by its vast attraction holds fast to the planet that seems to spurn it, and guides it round its aphelion curve at last.

This Providence is corrective and educative. It is perfect, therefore invariable. It summons man to the rule of its perfection rather than bends from its perfection in accommodation to man. As man is to it, so is it to him. It is like gravity, which gives us furtherance if we go its way, hindrance incessant and unrelenting if we go the other way. Therefore in all departures from it, through ignorance, blunder, sin, are we admonished, are we warned. The thickets that entangle us, the thorns that prick us, the stones on which our feet are bruising, tell us of the King's highway we have departed from. So far from the obedience in which our felicity must be, so far into the disobedience in which our bane must lie. But if corrective, educative too. Man is slow to learn ; but Providence by its constancy iterates and reiterates the lesson. Always does fire burn, water drown, intemperance imperil health ; fraud, trickery, malice always invoke their stripes ; while to kindness, generosity, truthfulness ever the high reward. Sin bandages the eyes to the vision beautiful, invariably does so ; but ever blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. And through this unalterable constancy is our



tuition realized. Where were our tuition if the rewards of virtue were now and then, and the penalties of sin occasional?

But again, this constant, law-shaped, law-shaping Providence can favor no indolence; it holds fast to the relation of means and ends which we find it so easy to forget, or rather not to learn. It is not safe to leave your horse with Providence unless you hitch him, or your family unprotected, unprovided for. In either case the means to the desired end are not used, and the wandering horse, the plundered home, or the ragged children are the consequence. Providence demands your providence, and is so insistent upon it that the natural issues of your improvidence it will in no degree remit to you. Ill, are you? Medicine, diet, rest, in these is your cure. Ignorant? Book, school, nature's volume, converse of the wise are for you. Spiritually chilly and inert? Here are church, Bible, prayer, — "means of grace." May that good Methodist phrase be quoted forever!

Lazy optimism says, Things will come out about right. Left to it they come out about wrong, or altogether so. The woes of society, the infamies of politics, all prosper till the girded man steps forth. The truth is, neglecting the means is simply neglecting Providence,

spurning its furtherance, or rather invoking its resistance. Providence is not with the nerveless and indolent ; Providence is with the consecrated, the earnest, the brave.

One topic more presses for a word. Under a Providence so steady and normal what place for prayer ? Surely the prevailing idea of prayer must be modified if such be our Providence. That idea has been, Ask and you shall receive. The ear of Heaven is bent to hear. Go, child of earth, in every need make appeal to the benevolence of God. And accordingly the prayers that have been the wont of men, for sunshine or for rain, favoring winds or tranquil sea ; here that the Mississippi may be restrained within its banks, there that the Nile may be generous in its overflow ; that the cold may abate, the tempest stay ; that harvests may be plentiful, or the pestilence be kept at bay ; prayers for the sick that they may be healed, for the ignorant that they may be enlightened, the unbelieving that they may believe ; prayers for school, church, hospital, in politics for one measure and another, in war that the God of battles may carry forward the columns. Few conceived blessings, for which men toil, are not taken to the throne of grace.

Men are impatient and irritable when approached on this theme. Considering the sen-

sibilities that are jostled, no wonder. Then with the whole subject of prayer there is a fundamental difficulty. If the wisdom of the soul, it is the foolishness of the understanding, and when the understanding assumes to decide upon it, it is likely to seem an unfriendly judge beyond jurisdiction. Possibly there is misconception here; possibly the sensitiveness is undue; possibly the judgment is mistaken. Oft-times nothing seems more shallow, not to say irreverent, than the dissection and criticism of a prayer. Critics thus engaged are likely to be like the man who should botanize a flower to find its perfume, and because his microscope detects none, sagely deciding that none is there.

It were certainly hard to ask people to suspend their praying till they can pray philosophically. Better in the main that they pray their prayer, assured that the Eternal Father is too good to grant the ill they ignorantly ask for; too gracious to withhold the good they fail to specify.

But though we may be forgiven if we do not pray philosophically, we can hardly be forgiven if we do not try to think so. And aiming at just thought, we ask, According to their petitions, are such prayers answered? Is the order of things really suspended, do you say? For that is what it must come to. You pray for

rain. Have you studied the bulletins of Old Probability without gaining suggestion as to the operation of how large a meteorology the rain comes to you? Shall the inhabitants of London have a sunny day the more or less; shall the aerial currents at the equator take other than their appointed course; at Hudson's Bay shall other breezes blow, and the voyager on the Caribbean Sea be exposed to other weather that, in answer to somebody's prayer, the orange groves in the San Gabriel valley may be watered? Shall the order of phenomena be interrupted because some one prays that the Mississippi may not attain to a devastating flood, or that the Nile may have a fertilizing overflow? With all that it implies, will head winds change to stern in answer to the sailor's cry? In answer to prayer shall the blizzard cease to come and the awful cyclone stay away?

\* Shall feter cease to generate fever, malaria be purged of its poison, sickness vanquished, death postponed, because some petitioner in faith believing asks for it? Shall the hungry be fed, the naked clothed, the ignorant enlightened on the same terms? Whether in moral conflicts or on literal fields of strife, shall prayers gain victories that toil and valor do not win? To ask such questions in these days seems trifling, hardly dignified. The excuse for doing so is a

theory which, though discredited and impossible, has still with multitudes a ruling power.

Ill for us could the interventions we ask for be granted. For the discipline of life comes from the unswerving, unrelenting order. Effect follows cause without anger and without mercy. The heavens and the earth are constant to their laws; gravity is invariable, chemistry changes not; in obedience to its law the wind bloweth where it listeth, be our prayers as they may. So we learn that it is immutability with which we deal; too wise to commit an error, we may think it; too good to be unkind, we may believe it; but never coaxed, never diverted. So after trifling with it and bruising against it and finding we can do nothing with it, we learn at last to place ourselves on its side, when, lo! it is our friend. Abraham Lincoln, asked once during the war if he felt sure God was on our side, replied in effect that he had ceased to concern himself as to whether God was on our side. The question with him rather was whether we were on God's side. Certainly we should not adopt God's side could we bring God to our side.

Science, the progressive conquest of the secrets of nature, by such answer to prayer how were that made impossible. Science builds on nature's unalterable constancy. What science

were not baffled did such prayer avail! A little time ago a clergyman of no mean intelligence and standing told me how once, in answer to his prayer, God calmed the sea on which he was voyaging; how in another emergency, for several months God gave him special aid in his study, speeding the prosecution of his tasks. Why thus favor him and not ten million others whose needs were as urgent and whose prayers were as earnest and fervid? Then what science were possible? Can science construct a chemistry, against the constancy of whose combinations human interests and desires may appeal successfully; or a meteorology, which prayers may infinitely vary? With such answer to prayer, indeed, we may well believe the very impulse to scientific investigation would pass away. A physician of my acquaintance a little time ago, caught by some mind-cure or faith-cure, put away his books and his medicines with "No more of this." A brave consistency! Why this toil at the laws of health which prayer may make superfluous? And why this multifarious study of the laws of nature, the escape from whose penalties or the realization of whose blessings may be won by a means so much easier? And, an extension of the same thought, why this tax to feed the hungry, instruct the igno-

rant, care for the feeble, if, according to our petitions, it is ask and ye shall receive? And exempted from the discipline provided in the constant appeal to them, what would become of the benevolent impulses, the brave and sympathetic heart? No; with such answer to prayer, not only were science impossible, intellect were paralyzed, humanity should wane, courage should lose its nerve, and pity's tears should dry. How much better that we be left to deal as we may with laws which are the type, yes, the reality of an undeviating righteousness, an unsparing mercy!

And yet another consideration of tremendous moment. Miss Phelps quotes somebody as saying: "'T is aye a wonderful thing to me how some ministers take it upon themselves to explain matters to the Almighty." It is not the wonder but the terror of the thought that is most impressive; a God whom our weak petitions could prevail with, not less so. The sentiments of awe, reverence, worship are bound up with this conception of an Immutable One, and could not survive the idea of an instructed or a wheedled God. Thus it seems to me Religion's very self has been saved through the impossibility of the very thesis she has sought most strenuously to maintain, and pronounced it infidel to deny.

Well, what then ? I have spoken of prayer as the wisdom of the soul, though the foolishness of the understanding. Leave the soul then with its wisdom. Let the soul instruct the understanding, not the understanding the soul. The understanding makes up an inventory of needs, and laughs at soul for thinking to obtain them. Soul does not think to obtain them, for it has no interest in them. Soul does all the praying; prayer is its function; but it only prays for the things of soul; the things of body it leaves to body to get as it can. Body wants food and clothing; soul cares nothing for them. Body wants houses; soul is well content with the heath. Body wants health and life; soul is not concerned for health, for it is never ill; and as for life, it has always that. Soul wants only few things, but they are great ones. Heaven and God suffice it. Yes, God is enough; and by its upreaching, yearning, striving, that is praying, it gets him and is satisfied. According to the legend, Thomas Aquinas once wrestling in prayer before the crucifix, the imaged Saviour spoke down to him, "Thomas, what wilt thou have of me?" The ecstatic saint replied, "Lord, only Thee!"

"Dear Lord, only thee,  
Only thee, I pray."

The like is ever the soul's cry to God.



And here is explanation of our oft-quoted words, Ask and ye shall receive. What the soul asks shall be given. The things of earth, body's things, must be toiled for. The things of heaven, the soul's things, are for the yearning, the upreaching. Lowell's lines are perhaps truer than he realized :

"'T is only heaven is given away,  
 "T is only God can be had for the asking."

I am aware that many may be poorly satisfied with such restriction of that which has been the resource in so many extremities, the solace in so many troubles. I know, too, what questions may arise. Has Heaven no succor? Are the cries and beseechings that assail it all in vain? Does the Infinite Ear not hear them? Does the Infinite Heart turn coldly from them? Is there no cognizance? Is there no pity? Does Heaven leave us to surmount our difficulties and bear our pains? Have the millions of mankind carried their appeal there to no purpose? May we no more in our special needs invoke its justice, nor plead its clemency? These questions, one and all, let the poet answer.

"Inquirer cease ; petitions yet remain,  
 Which Heaven may hear, nor deem religion vain ;  
 Still raise for good the supplicating voice,  
 But leave to Heaven the measure and the choice,  
 Safe in his pow'r whose eye discerns from far  
 The secret ambush of a specious pray'r ;

Implore his aid, in his decisions rest,  
Secure, whate'er he gives, he gives the best.  
Yet when the sense of Sacred Presence fires,  
And strong devotion to the skies aspires,  
Pour forth the fervors of a healthful mind,  
Obedient passions and a will resigned,  
For love, which scarce collective man can fill,  
For patience, sovereign o'er transmuted ill ;  
For faith, which panting for a happier seat,  
Counts death kind nature's signal for retreat.  
These goods for man the laws of Heaven ordain :  
These goods he grants, who grants the power to gain ;  
With these celestial Wisdom calms the mind,  
And makes the happiness she does not find."



**SATAN, OR THE GENIUS OF TRIAL.**



## THE GENIUS OF TRIAL.

---

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. — JOB i. 6.

FROM the associations of our first introduction to him, it is not easy to see where Satan got his bad reputation. We nowhere meet him in the Old Testament till we come to this passage, and here in what admirable company! The sons of God come together, and Satan comes among them. He mingles with them freely; he seems to be one of them. He converses face to face with the Almighty. There is a celestial atmosphere all about him. He brings no blasts from hell, only gales from heaven. Did the record leave him here, were nothing further told us of him, in our imagination we should probably clothe him in angelic attributes.

It has been the puzzle of criticism how to explain the identification of one who comes among the sons of God with the arch-enemy, the Devil.

It is now commonly agreed, I think, that Satan, as primarily conceived, is not the Devil at all. He seems to be a Persian conception, and was adopted into Jewish thought, perhaps in the time of the captivity. The early Christian writers, conspicuously John in the Apocalypse, without stopping to discriminate his real character, foisted the attributes of devil upon him, and sent him down the ages the personalized principle of moral evil. These attributes are now stripped off, and we are compelled in honesty to give Satan a better name, if not a more sympathetic fellowship. If we cannot love him more, we at least should speak him fairer.

In order to understand what Satan was conceived to be, what in this passage he is, we have only to take in mind the meaning of the word, and then read with the eyes of simple common sense. The word Satan means the adversary; adversary, that is, in the sense of trier or accuser, somewhat as a prosecuting attorney is an adversary. Some one, indeed, has felicitously described him as the attorney-general of the universe. There is nothing of malignity implied, nothing of wickedness for its own devilish sake, nothing of the spirit of the fiend that says,

"Evil be thou my good."

His office is to try men, to prove what is or is

not in them. His power, his commission, are not of himself, but are derived from the Highest. He comes very rightly among the sons of God, for he is one of them. And observe the conversation and the import of it. He has been wandering up and down in the earth, in the execution of his office, we may suppose. As he presents himself, the Lord asks him, Have you taken notice of my servant Job, how obedient he is? Have you observed that there is not another who keeps my commands so perfectly? whose hands are so clean, whose goodness is so positive? Now Satan does not believe in disinterested goodness, — a prosecuting attorney is not likely to. So he replies: "Is Job faithful for nothing? Haven't you given him wealth and family? Is n't he blessed and prospered by you? With good reason there is none other like him, for there is none other so favored. My opinion is, that he is dutiful because he sees that it is for his advantage to be so. But change your course towards him now; take away his wealth and family, strip him of his honors, and you will see that he is not in his nature so dutiful after all." And so Satan is sent forth to try Job on this charge, that he is good only from motives of self-interest. He takes away his oxen, his sheep, his camels, takes away his servants and his children. One



after another in swift detail these catastrophes are brought upon him. He bends as the tree before the north wind, but rises in the integrity of his spirit and says, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away." Then he is afflicted with loathsome disease, but he holds on. Then his friends come, sent by Satan as the final and hardest test, one is tempted to believe; still through their dolorous moralizing he holds on. This wonderful book is simply an epic of endurance under trial. Its sequel is designed to show that Satan cannot always maintain his indictment against the brave and steadfast soul. There is nothing of the Devil of malignant mischief in the story; only the Satan of trial, hard trial indeed; and what multitudes according to their circumstance have met as hard. So in the example of another and a greater far than Job. In the temptation of Jesus there was really no Devil, only the Satan of trial applying his tests to Jesus. Conscious of great powers, he has retired to the desert to meditate on the use to which he will devote them. "Command," says Satan, "that these stones be made bread;" achieve for yourself, that is, the resources of this world. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by consecrated obedience." "Go then," says Satan, "to the summit of the temple; win the dazzled admiration of your

people." "I am here to devote my gifts as God appointed, and not to tempt him by other use of them." "But," asks Satan, "where is your patriotism? Here are your people enslaved, their nationality destroyed. Why not work their deliverance? Why not be the Messiah so long expected, conquer the nations to a universal peace?" "Satan, begone! My power is but entrusted me, and I can only use it as I am bidden." These tests, we may well believe, were hard, and could we look in upon the struggles of these days and nights in the wilderness, we should see, no doubt, that they tried him sorely. Yet they revealed no self-seeking in that consecrated breast.

And again, when nearing the crisis of his life; "Master," says Peter, "you must not go to Jerusalem, for the Jews hate you and will kill you." "Get thee behind me, Satan! Your counsels are in accord with the instincts and the judgments of men, and not with the purposes of heaven which I am sent to accomplish." He does not here call Peter, Devil, as elsewhere the disciple who betrayed him; but he recognizes in him the Satan who, appealing to the love of friends and holding before him the pains that he must bear, would prove the loyalty of his heart.

Now that there was ever such a being as

Satan, I suppose few to-day believe. And the reason why we have ceased to believe in him is, that we have left behind the habit of personalizing principles which we find always with man in the early stages of his development. The gods and goddesses of Greek and Roman mythology, Zeus, Ceres, Fides, and the rest, are all the personalized forces of nature, and of the moral and immoral qualities in man. And so of the Hebrews and all other ancient peoples. The wondrous figures that pass before us in their literatures, Angel of Life, Angel of Death, Angel of Peace, Angel of Pain, come from personalizing principles out of which man's common experiences are drawn. And why not Angel of Trial, too? Why not Satan? And when the sons of God come together, why shouldn't he come among them, and why shouldn't he be esteemed as one of them? Again I say, though we may not love him more, we should speak him fairer.

Now, though there be no such personality as Satan, the principle he stands for is in the nature of things; and through that, friend, as really as he ever came to Job or Jesus, he comes to you and me. And it is an important truth for us to bear in mind, that that principle is in the nature of things; that Satan has a necessary place in the economy of the world.

In all the tests of manhood he comes to us. When one is brought to some moral emergency, where with reference to some cardinal principle he must stand or fall, there is Satan applying his tests to him. He comes to men eager for success, and raises question whether it is worth while to be too scrupulous as to the means thereto. He comes to men when success is won, with suggestion whether they shall not use it wholly to their own advantage. \* He comes to men intent upon some good work, and reasons whether it were not better to lower the standard, that speedier good may come, to do or at least tolerate some wrong. He brings men wealth to see if they will preserve their equanimity with it; visits them with adversity, that he may note its effect upon their spirits; enkindles their passions, to see how they will manage them; afflicts them with pain, to prove the manner of their endurance. All this, let me say again, not in malignity, that he may harm them, but in the execution of a heaven-appointed office, that he may test them. Satan, again I say, is in the nature of things.

But, says some one, to what end these tests? What good of being so tried? Consider a moment what tests are for. When the iron bridge was hung across the gulf through which flows the seething torrent of Niagara River, it was

tested. A single engine was sent across it in the first place, then an engine with a light train attachment, then a heavier train, until its safety was indubitably proven. Engineers said, We must not trust human lives on this structure till we know it is safe.

You may recall an incident that occurred some years ago in the British navy. A new gun of unexampled power had been invented in Italy. The English government, wanting to know the efficiency of its naval fleet, ordered out their strongest ironclad and exposed its broadside, a target to that terrible artillery. The aim of this, of course, was to know whether, in the duel of battle yet to come, when appeal should be made to shotted cannon to decide some question of national interest or honor, that vessel could be trusted in the encounter. If not, they said, it is best to know it now. And so all cannon are tested, and all rifles are tested; the iron beams out of which bridges are constructed are tested, and the steel plates with which ships are armored. In like manner compasses, watches, thermometers are tested. What is there we would devote to critical and serious uses, which we do not test, ourselves simply Satan in our way? And in all this we are imitating nature, which in its way tests the clover and the maple, the lion

and the deer, the hawk and the butterfly. The whole structure of Mr. Darwin's philosophy is reared on this as a corner-stone.

And why should not man be tested? Why should not Satan bring us to proof to show what quality we are of? How shall men be known, what they are good for, in what emergencies they can be trusted, unless they are tested? What shall prevent the weakling being set to the tasks of the strong and wise, unless it be the tests that prove him a weakling? And how shall the strong know their place and make known their efficiency save by the tests that reveal them? Who knows what dear crises would suffer for us were we never tried, and so proved unfit to meet them? Who can forecast the extremities he might be thrown into—a feeble wooden bridge to bear up the precious freights carried over Niagara River—were it not for the providential ordering, whereby he is continually being tested? How we suffered in the earlier stages of the war,—rout to our armies and death in our camps, because we had no officers that had been tested!

Again, the tests not only show a man his place, they teach him a just self-estimate. Why do I not give up and say there is no strength in me, that I am good for nothing?

Because in ten thousand tests I have proven the contrary. Why do I not arrogate to myself all moral qualities at their highest and best, the constancy, say, of Paul, the martyr consecration of Huss, the adamantine fortitude of Cromwell? Because in the tests applied to me I have learned better. What constancy could Peter boast, till, in the emergency, he must confess or deny his Master! How valiant a soldier one can be with his mother and sisters! How daring a sailor on a country hill-side! How charitable when no need invites his charity! How abstinent when the cup of intoxication is never proffered!

Yet something more. The disciplines by which we become strong are provided in the tests that are applied to us. Cannons, bridges, are tested. There is this difference, however, between a man and a cannon or bridge. The latter is not quite so strong after the test, the cannon is a little more likely to explode, the bridge to give way. The man, however, provided he has endured the test, is the stronger for it. Come his tests in the form of temptation or loss or pain, he emerges from them with manhood of another fibre. As the Indian brave conceives to flow into himself the valor of every warrior he slays, so do we take into ourselves the energy by which we triumph.

Why, all processes of education are simply series of tests. The child educates his limbs by testing them. It is hard mental tasks that give increased mental power. And so it is the moral struggles we are brought to, the moral conflicts we are compelled to engage in, that make us nobler moral beings. Satan, why, what a beneficent angel he is, to take me in hand and give me the discipline that shall enhance my manhood! How much more fortitude should I have were my fortitude never tested! How much more self-denying should I become were my self-denial never tried! You would fain be sheltered, would you, shut away from Satan and the trials he would lay upon you? Yet never are house-plants hardy, but those that are put forth into the heat and the wind and the storm.

Yet another consideration. It is the tests that reveal the weak places in a man, and so show him in the process of his education, where to brace up or to strengthen himself. Ships are variously tested before they are put to sea, to ascertain if they are seaworthy. So Satan comes to many a man to prove whether he be seaworthy; if not, to show him where his leaks or rotten timbers are. It is very comforting to know where we are strong, but the supremely important thing is to know where we



are weak; for it is with us as with pieces of machinery: it is not in the strong places but the weak ones that we break down. Am I disposed to be selfish? There is my weak spot, and the trials Satan is subjecting me to, have in them the spirit of admonition to look out for that spot. Have I some special appetite or passion? There is where I shall break down. Thank you, good Satan, for calling my attention to it. I knew a young officer in the army. He was high-toned and patriotic, and we liked him much. The first time he went under fire, however, his courage failed him, and he threw away his sword and ran. He felt that he had disgraced himself; he was terribly mortified. The next time he went under fire I saw him; he stood with blanched cheek, indeed, but he stood. After that he seemed to court danger as if intent to strengthen that weak spot.

Think of Peter: how brave before he was tried; how lamentably weak the trial proyed him! Think you there was no connection between that first great failure and his attitude in another and dearer crisis, when, ordered by the chief priests to teach no more in the name of Christ, he answered with the spirit of a Roman: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to obey God rather than man, judge ye." He had got his weak spot strengthened, you see.

But, some one says, these tests are so hard; how can we bear them? Yes, hard, but commonly speaking, not beyond us. Very likely, my friend, you know many things; but one thing you probably do not know; and that is the measure of your resources of moral power. You do not know this, for you have never called them into exercise. Have you ever been as brave as you could be, as self-reliant, as generous as was possible? Till your utmost has been put forth, do not say you cannot bear.

Often we may fortify our minds with the thought that the real triumph of our lives may be, not in our doing, but our enduring. You could be a hero in battle; can you take life's losses and trials and be the hero with them? We talk of success, and measure it by what our hands or brains accomplish. Yet after all, life's higher success, as God regards it, is not measured by what we do, but by what we bear. You celebrate the courage and endurance of our soldiers at Lookout Mountain.

"Oh, the wild charge they made!"

I celebrate the soldier at the foot of the mountain, who, maimed, could only follow the battle with his eye, yet with cheerful patience possessed his heart.

Often when the trial comes in the form of temptation, the better way is grimly to turn

round and fight it. An anecdote was in the papers some time ago, of a man listening to a charity sermon. He was greatly moved by it, though he loved his money ; and he resolved to be generous. When the contribution box was drawing near, however, his generous impulses waned and he pretty much decided to give nothing. While fumbling his pocket-book in indecision, the box was placed before him. Suddenly seized by an impulse, he threw in pocket-book and all, with the ejaculation : " There, old nater, squirm ! " He had found the key to many a moral difficulty. Do the good you are tempted not to do, right the wrong you do not want to right, and let " old nater " squirm. By and by " old nater " will stop squirming, and then you will know that your victory is won.

What a world without Satan ! What meaning to life without test or trial ? Whence the great examples that glorify humanity, without which endurance had no shining ideals, and virtue were but a dreary commonplace ? From those favored in the appointments of the world, the happy, the prospered, the untried ? No ! From the crises and the tragedies of history ; where loyalty is proved and faith is steadfast ; where outward ruin and defeat only witness the soul's more triumphant victory ;

from the Diet of Worms and the field of Sem-pach; from the prison where Bunyan languishes and the stake where Ridley dies; from the dungeon chambers of the Inquisition, from the Amphitheatre at Rome; it is lifted before us in the august composure of Socrates, and the awful renunciation of Calvary. A world without trial were a world without a hero; and it is only by way of the thorn-crown and the cross that the Son of Man may prove himself the Son of God.

The sermon is done; yet I am tempted to preach it over again through a story which possibly you have never seen, for it comes through a Persian Passion Play. The leading character, in all essential particulars the counterpart of our Job, is a king of Ayo'diah, and his name is Harischandra. He possesses a dearly beloved wife and child, and is the most prosperous and blessed of mortals.

But unfortunately for his peace, his very virtue has awakened the jealousies of supernatural beings; and in an assembly of the heavenly powers the fear is entertained that, unless his merits can be abated, he will excel the gods themselves. Therefore it is decided that the attempt shall be made, by such means as divine ingenuity may invent, to extort from him a lie.

To this end Viswamitra, the Satan of the tale, comes down and brings his kingdom into manifold extremities, yet offering ever a remedy which implies a lie — just a little lie. He is stripped of his possessions, his kingdom is wrested from him ; he can have all back again for just a lie. All the resources of supernatural cunning are used to make easy or to trick from him unawares that lie. All resources of argument, all sophistries are employed to wring from him a lie.

He with his family are reduced to beggary, and thus driven forth ; yet ever with the promise whispering in his ear, that he may have all back again for just a lie. He is led through perils ; he encounters fiends and goblins ; yet ever peace and safety for a lie. He is compelled to be the murderer of his child, whose dear life he might have purchased with a lie. At length he is brought to the extremity in which he must be the executioner of his wife ; and here let the drama tell its story.

“Slave, this woman has been sentenced by our king to be executed without delay. Draw your sword and cut her head off.”

“I obey, master.”

“My husband ! What ! Do I see thee again ? I applaud thy resolution. Yes, let me die by thy sword. Be not unnerved, but

be prompt and perform thy duty unflinchingly."

"My beloved wife, the days allotted to you in this world are numbered. You have run through the span of your existence. Prepare yourself to meet your doom."

"Harischandra! Are you going to slaughter this poor woman? Wretched man! Spare her! Tell a lie even now and be restored to your former state."

"I pray, my lord, attempt not to beguile me from the path of rectitude. Nothing shall shake my resolution. Even though thou didst offer me the throne of Indra, I would not tell a lie. Depart! I dread not thy wrath; I no longer court thy favor."

"My love! Lo! I am thy executioner. Come, lay thy head gently on this block. Chandravitri, my wife, be firm, be happy. The last moment of our sufferings has come; for of sufferings, too, there is happily an end. Here cease our woes, our griefs, our pleasures. Mark; yet awhile and thou shalt be free as the eagles that now soar in the skies."

"This sabre will do its duty. Thou dead, thy husband will die too. This self-same sword shall pierce my breast. First the child, then the wife, last the husband, all victims of a sage's wrath. I, the martyr of truth, thou and

thy son martyrs for me, the martyr of truth. Yes, let us die cheerfully. Yes, let all men perish, let all gods cease to exist, let the stars that shine above grow dim, let all seas be dried up, let all mountains be levelled to the ground, let wars rage, blood flow in streams, let millions of millions of Harischandras be thus persecuted ; yet let truth be maintained, let truth ride victorious over all, let truth be the light, truth the guide, truth alone the lasting solace of mortals and immortals."

He strikes ; but the sword is transformed into a string of pearls that winds around her, and the hosts of heaven appear to him.

"Harischandra, be ever blessed ! You have borne your trials and proved to all men that virtue is of greater worth than all the vanities of a fleeting world. No stain attaches to thy race, of which thou art the incomparable gem. Like the gold that has passed through successive crucibles, thou, O King of Ayo'diah, shinest in greater splendor than even yon god of light, now rising to our view on the orient hills."

In the sequel his child and former state are restored to him ; and he finds that the trials and the sorrows through which he has passed have no reality save in the strengthened and ennobled manhood they have left him. Not thus, perhaps, may it ever seem ; and yet we may

take courage from the thought that these perplexities, these trials, are only frowning messengers of peace; that their purpose is to enhance our higher blessedness, our nobler welfare, our diviner joy.





## **SELF-ABNEGATION.**



## SELF-ABNEGATION.

---

But what things were gain to me I counted loss for Christ.  
PHIL. iii. 7.

AN incident fell under my notice some time ago, that set me thinking. A man was employed to tend a railway switch, a common and lowly man, whom polite society might regard with indifference. The switch was near a steep embankment down which was a considerable depth of water. His child, a darling little boy, was playing near. A train was approaching, and it was his duty to change the switch; but just then he saw his child fall down the embankment into the water. What should he do? What would you do in the like extremity? To change the switch was the work of a moment, — that precious, awful moment. Parental instinct bade him leap for his child; but there was another voice whose tones were imperative. What he *did* do was to change the switch. The train, with its precious freight of human lives, rolled safely on,

and he drew his boy out of the water and carried him home dead in his arms.

I take it for granted all will say he did just right. Nay, were the outcome of the story the reverse, had he saved his child and let the train go to destruction, however you might compassionate his weakness in the depths of your hearts, you would condemn him. But on what principle? Why should he save the train rather than his boy? To be sure many lives might have been sacrificed had he done differently; but in the general distribution of sorrow how many would have suffered more than he? A few husbands had lost their wives, a few wives their husbands, and several parents had lost each a child; but where lay the obligation to spare their hearts, with such sorrow to his own? Casuistry can make a fair case here.

I would like to narrate another instance. A deed of blood had been committed, in France I think it was. A priest, a Catholic, was accused of it, was brought to trial, was convicted and sentenced to life-exile in some far-off mine. Years passed on; long years to him of toil and loneliness and reproach, and his end was nigh. But another there was, whose end was likewise nigh, who his life through had seemed to deserve the world's customary favor. As his day

approached he made confession of that crime, and, what was more, laid bare the fact that, in the confessional, to this same priest he had told his guilt, and in penitence sought absolution. Your hearts almost cease their throbbing as you contemplate that fact. All the terrible anxiety of that trial, all the ignominy of conviction, all the desolation of those years — all, when one word would have brought release — the poor priest had endured that he might keep inviolable the secrets of his office.

Now I am not so sure you approve this act. You may say there was a higher principle involved than the keeping of the secrets of the confessional, that a juster and a broader ethics had taught the priest to expose the murderer and save himself. And yet something within you responds to his example. You may disapprove his deed, yet him none the less you approve.

Respecting neither of these incidents have I anything further to say. I use them as a convenient doorway by which to come to the interior and ruling forces of the nature. I wish to ask why it is that such acts move us as they do; why they kindle and uplift us so? And I would be understood to affirm that the recognition of this peculiar influence is practically universal. You may be very unheroic; like

Peter you may deny your Master, aye, a hundred times deny him; you may be never so hard and grasping and selfish, yet such deed speaks to you with an eloquence that is irresistible. And not only is the confession of this influence universal, not only are all men responsive to it, in a certain way, it has a charm beyond any other. When you read Roman history, the page you linger over with most rapt attention is not that which celebrates the victories of Scipio, but that which narrates the return of Regulus to Carthage. In the presence of great powers you exult; before great renunciation you stand with bowed head and hushed and reverent heart. The dazzle of Napoleon's achievement, the echo of Chatham's eloquence, the fame of Newton's intellect, great and wondrous though they be, lay not the spell upon your heart that is felt where virtue, seeking no reward, simply true to her own fair self, dares and surrenders all things.

The explanation of this influence is, such example charms our spirits into their natural and life-giving atmosphere. We feel an impulse from it that we know is life, real life and true, life worth the living, aye, the dying. In it or through it we are sure we see what human nature was made for, what we were made for, and would fain become. We turn over

the record of martyrs — as to their intellects, mistaken very likely — for the faith for which they died, you might well disdain to live. Yet as you ponder them, you approve the high wisdom of their choice. Ignorant, mistaken were they; yet your prayer is: “Grant, O Lord, that according to my wisdom I may live as they died; than this nothing higher will I ask of thee.”

The feeling I thus describe is the confession you spontaneously make to the lofty wisdom and supreme excellence of self-sacrifice. In advance of any reasoning about it you thereby acknowledge it altogether good. Shown it in these examples, and all that is deepest in you is won by it. Arguments may persuade that the priest should not have done just so. The pleading of the example none the less is felt and must be.

Altogether good! Altogether good for whom? For that individual patriot, hero, martyr; that Regulus, that Vivia-Perpetua, that Servetus, that Cranmer? It seems to be using the word good in an unusual sense, and indeed it is. But here is another point: if really good, you are ready to urge, there can hardly be self-abnegation; rather self-gain, self-promotion. The demurrer has a basis of truth in it, and I have often thought with one of our



most eloquent preachers, that self-hood, and not self-sacrifice were the better word here. Still the word in its common use is well, for man's self, as popularly conceived, has ranged on the lower plane, and his self-abnegation has been an abnegation of selfishness. Always he has recognized the double tendency in his nature, his life

"held in equipoise

By opposite attractions and desires,  
The struggle of the instinct that enjoys,  
And the far nobler instinct that aspires."

But, alas, the enjoying instinct has been so powerful, this manifold and fair utility so engrossing, that the way of his aspiring has seemed a perpendicular ascent, hard if not impossible. And hence always the appositeness of the appeal: forego, renounce, surrender! The way up is a way of giving up. He that will save his life shall lose it; he that places anything before the supreme excellence shall not win that excellence. Wouldst thou enter into life? Sell that thou hast and come take up thy cross. Whatever of earthly good lies between you and the nobler standard; whatever must be purchased with conscience seared, manhood humiliated, aspirations balked, — set it aside and push on. Cut off thy hand; pluck out thine eye; halt and maimed enter thou

into life, if halt and maimed thou must, but in the way of death, tarry thou not. Give up thy wealth, give up thy ease, give up thy fair repute; — all for truth, everything for virtue. Does the way of duty lead over Calvary? Over Calvary then go, the thorn-crown on thy forehead, the cross on thy shoulder.

This appeal, which all higher morality, which all genuine religion makes, I affirm the appositeness of, an appositeness that springs from the contrasted relation which this ideal good and this present felicity sustain to us. That ideal good, name it in terms never so fair, still, practically it is remote from us, while this common and lower good is so intertwined with our very lives. To give up this for that, high choice it may be, choice we applaud when another makes it, but it is so hard, so hard. Hence the disposition to depreciate the standard and bring the ideal down. And hence the habit of dwelling so largely on the prospective advantage of such renunciation, as though it were not to be thought of without some sweetmeat recompense. Here take care. That such renunciation may be the way to a good fairer than any other, I deem certain; but beware how you compromise it. That renunciation must be hearty and uncalculating, or it is nothing. Men may toil for pay, even genius

may exact reward, but virtue for hire, righteousness for a consideration, no, no! If the reward of virtue be the motive, you shall not gain the virtue. If you prefer anything before it, you shall not have it. Me first, she says; me with whatever else, or not me.

An austere standard, is it not? Many would quarrel with it for that reason. Yet I will venture to say that in this principle of self-abnegation is the key to the solution of one or two problems of gravest importance. And first among them the great question of human happiness.

As you listen to men's talk, you find a prevailing conviction that happiness and virtue go together; that the latter is, in very truth, the spring of the former. This conviction is mine. Right here, at this particular hour, the divorce between them is marked and painful, virtue buffeted, discredited, eating the hard crust of poverty, treading the way of toil and weariness and scorn. Yet on the wide outlook, it none the less is true that virtue and happiness walk together, that men are happy in proportion as they are true and good. This is the theme alike of moralist and philanthropist, while lips divinest, wreathed in beatitude, have declared that Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are the meek, blessed are the merciful, blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

But another fact. You listen as men talk and you shall hear them very loudly assert that happiness is the universal aim, that man's supreme endeavor is to be happy. This statement thus broadly made I do not believe true; though with mild qualification it might stand.

Now what shall we say to these statements placed thus side by side — happiness, the outcome of virtue; and happiness, if not the universal, at least the common aim of man? Does he cultivate virtue to the end that he may be happy? Virtue for hire, then, is it not? good behavior for which he stipulates return, — at heart no virtue. Does he pursue the happiness without thought of the virtue? Alas, then, in seeking the end he forgets the means, and what possible success can attend his efforts?

My notion is that an immense mistake lurks here in the fact that happiness is made an object of pursuit. I am convinced that the preponderating reason why there is so much unhappiness is, because happiness is so much thought of, because it is pursued so strenuously. For the pursuit is one of those illusive ones that conduct to nothing satisfying. Happiness is fair, but she will not be laid hold upon. Her wont is to come when you are not looking for her. All experience shows her a coy maiden.

Seek her and you shall not find her; woo her and you shall not win her; turn and chase after her and she is a will-o'-the-wisp that lures into swamps and graveyards. Forget her in the consecrations of love and duty, and she is a benignant and smiling angel at your side.

Wherein is the highest praise we can receive from our fellows? Young men, young women, this question interests you, and I will bring it to you for answer. Wherein for you is the very highest praise and approval? Men may say you are fair and wise, but there is a nobler still. They may add that you are generous, manly, brave, but there is a better yet. They may affirm that your life accords with truth, justice, honor, and they have not touched the summit. They may allow you genius, even saintliness, and still encomium is below the highest. Strange it may seem when I tell you that the highest applause is never spoken, is that which receives you in simple silence, which takes it for granted that so closely are you allied with virtue that the brave, true, chivalrous deed will of course be found in you, which greets superlative excellence with no surprise. The terse sentence of Emerson puts it well. "You would compliment a coxcomb doing a good act, but you would not praise an angel." Just so the most perfect happiness is never

obtrusive, bears no testimony. It is experienced when we are beyond happiness, consecrate to high service and great ends. Then it is the very health of our nature.

The way to it, then, if not easy, is plain to think. You shall see an artist before whom flits some ideal of beauty, and out of his heart he shall say: "Stay, beautiful presence; be thou mine; I ask no more." The student is content with his garret, happy in poverty, for knowledge is his bride and he loves her. Just so, could we only look to virtue. "Fair presence, stay with me. Be thou my bride, thou my beautiful. Impose hard conditions if thou wilt. Let thy dowry be poverty, loss, failure, only remain thou steadfast. Better thee alone, than all beside thee." In that ravishment of soul, looking far off from happiness, we should be happy. Where self is abdicated, where happiness is forgotten, there she comes.

And what is true of us in our individual lives is true on the largest theatre of life. Whence the woes of society, but in the colossal inversion of this principle? Whence the shame and peril and horror of our politics but right here? Clever selfishness has never yet solved the problem of social welfare and never can. Always it is circumventing itself, and its game is ruin. Only that weal that is rooted in virtue

shall endure ; and that shall endure. "I have heard," wrote Dryden, "of some virtuous persons who have ended unfortunately, but never any virtuous nation. Providence is engaged too deeply when the cause becomes so general."

Another question this principle throws some light upon is the question of evil ; not indeed a calcium blaze, but a light, none the less, it were well to recognize.

The prevalent tendency is to view the evil of the world with reference to happiness, to make happiness the criterion by which to judge the world. The world should provide you happiness, the argument is. And yet what burdens does it impose ! what crosses are even faith and virtue called to bear ! "Dark fact," you say, "this world ! Where corn should thrive, there thistles grow, and where joy should lighten, grim shadows fall."

Change the point of view. By what right do you assume that the world should guarantee you happiness ? Is that absolutely best, the highest, fairest thing ? As I look upon the world it seems to me not unkindly in its appointments. I find myself enswathed in laws I cannot well complain of. Look out upon the world or in upon myself, I can but repeat the chant of David, "The law of the Lord is perfect." Yet that the appointments of the world

are with primary reference to human happiness, it were impossible to say.

The greater and fairer than happiness rises before us again. Grant that it is impossible that I be always happy, that pain is my lot; is it impossible that I be virtuous? I cannot be happy; can I be true? Here I stand. Of difficulties I have my share; that sorrows and disappointments are before me, I deem not improbable; but to the attainment of honor and righteousness is the world fair to me? I must be poor, my faculties are feeble; yet according to my nature and capacity, is not the best the universe has still mine? Now that the ordering of the world is with reference to virtue and not happiness is my steadfast conviction; that you and I therefore are only in harmony with the world when this is our supreme aim, follows of necessity. And in proportion as this thought enchants us will the world look fair. As we live not for happiness, but virtue, will its orderings be beautiful. To the selfish, to the sensual, it is a great enigma. "Vanity of vanities," said the Preacher, "all is vanity;" and, poor fool, after the life he had lived, no wonder he thought so. To the aspiring and the faithful it is no enigma. There are discords; but beneath them is the grand swell of an eternal harmony. Where understanding cannot ex-



plain, and reason fails, something whispers to the reverent heart :

“ All nature is but art unknown to thee ;  
All chance, direction, which thou canst not see.”

Under God's appointment the world is friendly to happiness, but it is planned for virtue.

This seems to me sometimes the last and only thing I can say. I see men balked, chagrined ; in the struggle of the world they are defeated, they have failed. I can but say, Yes, you are defeated, you have failed ; but know this, there is a star in your zenith still. Virtue still maintains her shining poise above you. The best the world has is before you yet, will you but reach forth for it. I can only say to the young and aspiring : I hope success is for you ; could my prayer be heard, your dreams should be realized. But success, as men ordinarily reckon, may be very expensive. Virtue, however, whatever you pay for it, is never dear ; for honor you cannot give too much. You want fame, but believe me, it is not worth one throb of virtue ; you want wealth, but it is not worth the struggles and the pains of victorious poverty. Success may not be for you, but you can live without it. Very happy, useful, beautiful lives may be lived without wealth or any outward circumstance ; but without virtue no man ever lived or can.

It is the summit of Calvary we have climbed to-day, where love and duty faithful unto death, fix the ideal of mankind. Ideal do I say? Yes, yours and mine, the standard that the Christ has set, and which we only look to with responsive and with yearning heart. Too high, too hard, perhaps you say; a standard that angelic natures could alone attain, if even they. Ah, friends, complain not, but rejoice if your ideals are high. If far above us, it is with eye upon them that alone we rise; and well for us if we find them ever rising. It is not by what we can attain that we are attracted up, but by what we can endlessly approximate. Thankful let us be in our weariness and failure, if we can look up and see them shining. Thankful let us be, hard as the climbing is, that fixed there they invite, but come not down to meet us. Is not our own heart voiced in these great lines a brave spirit once addressed to his ideals :

“ Angels of Growth, of old in that surprise  
Of your first vision, wild and sweet  
I poured in passionate sighs  
My wish unwise  
That ye descend my heart to meet, —  
My heart so slow to rise !

“ Now thus I pray : Angelic be to hold  
In heaven your shining poise afar,  
And to my wishes bold,  
Reply with cold,

Sweet invitation, like a star  
Fixed in the heavens old.

"Did ye descend, what were ye more than I?  
Is 't not by this ye are divine,  
That, native to the sky,  
Ye cannot hie  
Downward, and give low hearts the wine  
That should reward the high?"

"Weak, yet, in weakness I no more complain  
Of your abiding in your places;  
Oh! still, howe'er my pain  
Wild prayers may rain,  
Keep pure on high the perfect graces,  
That stooping could but stain.

"Not to content our lowness, but to lure  
And lift us to your angelhood,  
Do your surprises pure  
Draw far and sure  
Above the tumult of young blood,  
And starlike there endure.

"Wait there, wait and invite me while I climb,  
For see, I come! — but slow, but slow!  
Yet ever as your chime,  
Soft and sublime,  
Lifts at my feet, they move, they go,  
Up the great stair of time."

**THE WAY WHERE THE LIGHT  
DWELLETH.**



## THE WAY WHERE THE LIGHT DWELLETH.

---

Where is the way where the light dwelleth ?

JOB xxxviii. 19.

I ONCE heard from the lips of Robert Collyer a little anecdote which, stored in my mind till this time, suggests the sermon that I bring you. In one of his trips to England he was led to make a considerable journey out of his way that he might visit a cathedral in which was a famous window. He approached the cathedral of a dull, rainy morning, and the window was pointed out to him. As he looked upon it there was nothing about it to attract his interest. It was unshapely ; it was even unpleasant to look upon. Had he described it then and there, he would have said that the noble structure was defaced by it. He went inside, however, and the marvel of the window was plain. In its wondrous light the whole cathedral seemed glorified. Still his friends insisted that he had not seen it yet, but must come again when the sun was shining. He obeyed their directing. As he approached the cathe-

dral the second time, the window looked no better than before; but as he went within, it seemed to him the light of Transfiguration was there.

This is not a very striking incident surely. Your experience of any day would be as interesting in the narrative. It is one of those incidents, however, that pleasantly point the way to certain aspects of life; indeed, a whole philosophy of living is in it. The contrasted temper of men's minds, as cheerful and despondent, comes, more than from anything else, from the point of view from which they contemplate their common experiences; whether they look at them in the direction from which the light is coming, like Robert Collyer viewing the cathedral window from within, or whether in the direction away from the light, with backs turned to the light, like Robert Collyer looking up at the cathedral window from without and offended at its ugliness. The experiences of men are outwardly much the same. Here are two living side by side. They look out upon the same sunrise and the same sunset; their eyes take in the sweep of the same scenery; alike they love and marry and are blessed with children; they meet day by day the same neighbors; alike they toil, are sick, are cheated, chagrined, buffeted; they witness

about them the same poverty, ignorance, folly, crime; and the one, like Carlyle, becomes dark and moody, while the other, like our Emerson, dwells ever in "Syrian sunshine." The difference between them is mainly this: The one has learned the way where the light dwelleth, and whatever he looks at looks thitherward; the other looks in the opposite direction, and so sees the harder features of life, as you see clouds in the west when the sun is in the east, with no light behind them. Of course they are black then, and the spirit feels their blackness. We talk of cheerfulness, meaning thereby not merely a smiling face, but a hopeful and a happy heart. He that showeth mercy, says the apostle, with cheerfulness. Likewise, he would say, he that doeth justice, with cheerfulness; he that toils, with cheerfulness; he that suffers, with cheerfulness; he that mourns, with cheerfulness. But this is possible and only possible as through our trials and worries and losses we look out where the light dwelleth. Then it will shine in upon us, lighting eyes that are wet with tears and possibly making rainbows in them.

In other words, the great, beautiful laws, which are only the natural and orderly ways of God's continuous providence, need to be kept in view. One of the infirmities we are ever



allowing to creep upon us is the viewing of the discomfort of this present moment wholly with relation to ourselves. We fall into complaining and melancholy because we do not reach out with our vision to take in the larger purpose of things. The morning fog that brings such chill to us not merely obscures the sun; we allow it to be a cloud upon our spirits, for our whole mind becomes absorbed in the little discomfort that it brings us. It aggravates our bronchitis or neuralgia, and that is as far as we think of it. Bad, very bad, this fog. Why can't the sun shine? As though the sun were not shining and the fog the beneficent effect thereof. Some of you saw this anecdote that a little time ago went the rounds of the papers. "What an infernal day this is!" said a man to his neighbor one chilly, rainy morning. "Why," says the neighbor, "it refreshes the earth, it makes the grass grow, and it pleases God. Why do you call it infernal?" The two men were typical each of his class. The one saw only the clouded sky and the damp and chilly air, and his spirit was grieved in consequence. The other looked beyond all this, and saw the beneficence, and his spirit was glad. Or we may say, they were facing in opposite directions. The one was Robert Collyer outside the cathedral and looking up at the

window, and seeing it an unshapely thing ; the other was Robert Collyer inside the cathedral, looking out of the window, his eyes meeting the light that is streaming through it and mellowed by it. There is a fair-weather-side of all rainy days, my friends.

I well recall my first lesson in natural theology. Once when a child, of a cold winter day, I came in with numb feet and aching fingers and asked my mother, why there was any winter ? why God allowed it to be cold ? I have since heard children of much larger growth ask very similar questions. My mother was a good theologian, and she answered well. As she held my hands in hers to warm them, she told me that the earth had been working hard all summer, and now it had gone to sleep that it might get rested for another season. Just as I awoke fresh and rested every morning, so did the earth every spring after its long nap of the winter. If it did not have its sleep, it could do nothing. Very likely, in a scientific point of view, I might improve on my mother's statements ; but she pointed my mind to where the light dwelleth. Often since, with my severer finger-aches, I have had need to look the same way ; and it is grateful to remember that there is a spring-time hovering upon every winter.

You suffer or have suffered, very likely ; many days and nights you have been stretched on the bed of pain. You see suffering ones about you, lives smitten and from which the joy is gone. You raise question as to this, you complain about it, you criticise the world and its appointments because of it ; and no wonder you do thus, looking at pain from the direction that you do, seeing merely the fever's agony or the contusion's ache.

You say the world ought to be without pain. But change your point of view ; look out there where the light dwelleth, and see how it looks then. What is the explanation of human pain? Why, this : Laws gracious, beautiful, perfect, are appointed for our bodies, in the keeping of which are our health and joy. When we were fashioned there was put into us a nervous system, one important function of which is to warn us of any danger. To every point of the surface of your body, and to all your interior organs, the threads of this system are distributed ; and all are connected with the brain, the organ of intelligence. When you come in conflict with these laws, that is, when you disobey them, that is, when you are bringing harm upon yourself, — perversely, ignorantly, — these nerves, faithful monitors that they are, give warning of your danger. Quick

as the harm comes, and while the peril lasts, do they admonish, do they warn. You get dust into your eye, and what happens then? Why, by instantaneous telegraphy the nerve transmits a message to your brain, telling it that your eye is in danger, and asking immediate succor. That dust would destroy your eye, and so while it is there the nerve is constant in its warning. That warning you call pain. You do not like it, but what would become of your eye, pray, if it were not for it? What would become of your stomach if no pain followed gluttony? In a physiology I have read, an account is given of one who, his lower limbs being paralyzed, was ordered by his physician to hold his feet in tepid water. Feeling no sense of warmth, he plunged them into boiling water and held them there. He never had the use of his feet thereafter, for the nerves had lost their cunning, and the pain that normally attends a scald was not there to save him. Speak kindly then of pain, for it is your friend. You do not like it, but it is beneficent. In its appointment Heaven ordered well for you.

I want to say just here that as to the deeper pang it must be the same. The hard consequences of sin, moral debasement, impoverished spirit, dimmed ideals, bitterness, remorse,

these, like fever heats and rheumatic aches and dyspeptic miseries, are monitory. They tell the man that it is wrong with him; they are the remonstrance of the nature against the injury that is being done it; they are the positive and urgent and persistent appeal to us to stop sinning. Is there a hell? men ask. Earnestly, devoutly, I hope there is. We could not get along without that possibly. Hell is bad consequence following from bad cause; and thus is normal, natural, and altogether desirable. You would not have good consequence follow from bad cause, would you? What a terrible world it would be in which indulgence brought no pain, and crime was followed by no remorse, in which the issue of to-day's sin should be to-morrow's peace and joy! Brimstone may be a metaphor, but hell is literal, as you will find, or probably have found. There is this mistake, however, in the prevailing conception of it. It is kindled not by the malignity, but the love of Heaven; its office is not of wrath, but of mercy. There is a cheerful view, even of hell. Look at it towards heaven, and there is a light about it that is not lurid. It is not infernal, but purgatorial. How pathetically we have been warned of suffering for sin, as though that were the worst and not the best of it. Suffer! While I sin I

pray God I may suffer ! Where the bruise is may the pain be too. It is a fearful thing, we are told, to fall into the hands of the living God ; but what were it, oh, what were it to fall out of them ? " Take care," says the evangelist. " God has appointed that you shall suffer for every sin." Shall I ? Is it indeed so good as that ? Then let us approach his altar, and with thanksgiving bless his name.

It was not my purpose, however, to discuss these more abstract themes. I wanted to get a little nearer to the common life, to speak a word with reference to the common trials and worries and perplexities of men. It was my aim to say that there is a light side of them ; that they are not purposeless unless we make them so. And this is precisely what we do. We magnify some little ill until it darkens to our gaze the whole heaven of God's providence ; or rather when we come to it we fix our look upon the dark and ugly side of it, and refuse to look round in the direction whence the light is coming. That is why they worry us so, and get the better of us so often, and make such dolorous and dissatisfied creatures of us. Discipline ! We have come to dislike that word, and chiefly, I suppose, because we dislike the thing. But fairly now, what were life without it ? Whence the development of strength,

courage, fortitude; whence the refining and toning of our natures without discipline? You complain, madam, of the daily swarm of vexations that so try you. Try you, do they? Fair indication, I should say, that you need to be tried. You get discouraged under them, and criticise and perhaps doubt, and possibly deny the Providence that is trying to bless you. What you need to do is to look through your vexations, out there where the light is, and so take into your view their more beautiful meaning. What were life really worth to you, were it not for the experiences you make your vexations out of? Why will you not see that you are like the violin that is out of tune, and that these vexations are simply a process of tightening the strings so as to fit you to give forth real music? Why will you resist and baffle the process, and so give forth such disagreeable sounds in place of the heavenly harmony that otherwise would come from you? The light for you is the fact that it is a tuning process you are being subjected to.

But there is something more than discipline. I come to those whose trials are of the sterner sort. There is a direction whence the light is streaming unto them. I take some man or woman who is afflicted by a lingering and torturing malady, whose years seem wasted if we

take a purely earthly view of them. What I want them to believe is, that these years may not be wasted after all. Thou knowest not

“what argument

Thy life to thy neighbor's creed hath lent.”

No life is wasted that bears its part; and what that part shall be Providence sometimes decides, not we. We cannot always elect the tasks we would perform, the service we would render. The world, indeed, wants of most of us our special work; possibly, poor sufferer, it has need of your patient enduring. Possibly the example of your waiting and trusting is the very service your fellows need most to have rendered them. It takes all parts in music to make the perfect harmony; and your strain, low and pathetic minor though it be, cannot be spared from it. There is the light behind your cloud, and you may see it if you will look towards it. Your patient enduring the world has need of, and God asks it of you. In the coming good, depend upon it, you shall have your place; for as much as the bravest and the strongest you will have done your part to bring it.

And yet something more. Men often complain of the lowliness of their part and the hardship and privation it lays upon them. That is because they consider only the imme-



diate hardship and discomfort. The soldier working in the trenches around Petersburg or on Morris Island was depressed, no doubt, if he contemplated merely the heaps of mud or sand that he threw up. When he kept his eye to the light, however, and saw that it was victory he was digging for, it was another matter. That subordinate and laborious work had meaning then. Our common work may have as much. The light side of it is the great and beautiful issue it is bringing a little nearer. And when one bruised and maimed falls out of the rank, with what misgiving are we haunted! Then ought it to be rather remembered that the period of enlistment is fulfilled, that there is no more service expected, that his it is to wait for the victory and rejoice in it when it comes. I remember once during the war, the news of a great victory was brought us, then stationed at Port Royal. Regiment after regiment uttered their joy in vociferous hurrahs; and then, a sight at which not a few eyes moistened, the inmates of the hospital, some led by stronger comrades, some supported upon crutches, came forth and freely hurrahed, too. Ah, theirs not less than ours was the joy, for theirs not less than ours was the victory! Every worn-out and crippled soldier of life shall have part in the victory.

I know not the special experiences of those whom I am addressing, but there is one experience so common, ah, so common! that I am sure I cannot mistake in supposing that some of you have known it. Some mother is here who has laid away a pair of shoes once worn by wayward little feet, a shining lock clipped from a head her bosom pillowed. Some man is here who saw perish at his side his being beauteous; some woman who has felt the hand that took hers so warmly grow cold and relax its grasp. Where is the light for me? you ask, with heart yearning for the darlings lost. Lost? lost, are they? Lost? Say transfigured rather, and hovering on your vision in their utter beauty. Not lost while you have memory and affection; yours once and now and always.

“‘God lent him and takes him,’ you sigh;  
—Nay, there let me break with your pain:  
God’s generous in giving, say I;  
And the thing which he gives, I deny  
That he ever can take back again.

He gives what he gives. Be content!  
He resumes nothing given, be sure!  
God lend? Where the usurers lent  
In his temple, indignant he went  
And scourged away all those impure.

So look up, friends! You, who indeed  
Have possessed in your house a sweet piece  
Of that heaven which men strive for, must need

Be more earnest than others are, — speed  
Where they loiter, persist where they cease.”

Knowing, says the apostle, that the trial of your faith worketh patience. Thank God then for the trial of your faith; for patience, which is another word for endurance, which is another word for strength, is born of it. Never, perhaps, is our faith tried as when we are called to contemplate the folly and perversity of our fellows; when, looking round upon the world, we see such multitudes stubbornly and wilfully working their own great harm. What hope for the world can there be for us? What dream of good can we indulge? What vision of moral achievement can there be? It is indeed a melancholy prospect if we look merely at the folly and perversity, the shortsightedness and the sin; and no wonder those who do so get discouraged. But those who do so simply turn away from the light; that is, they look off in the opposite direction from whence the light is coming; for no more plain is the perversity and the sin than is the Providence that somehow directs them to beautiful issues at last. The very wrath of man is turned at length to praise. All its long and weary way the race has been blundering and stumbling; but by a beautiful fatality it has been blundering and stumbling upward. And so, I suppose, it

must continue to do, out of its mistakes extracting wisdom, through its very propensities to the worse working out its better. While we keep looking toward the light, while we look through human frailty to Providence, we cannot get discouraged, but can work on and hope, nay, be certain, that a better and a best is coming. There is no chance in human affairs; there is no accident. There is an all-embracing purpose that we cannot escape; that must work its own evermore.

It is this light side of things that we want to keep our eyes turned to, for the whole philosophy of cheerfulness is in our doing so, and cheerfulness is inner sunshine, and sunshine is health and life. And this is a lesson we are bound to heed, not for ourselves alone, but in our dealings with one another. It is one of the happy features of our time, the change that has come over the ministrations of religion, so much less moralizing upon the pain, so much more exultation at the joy. We are entering upon the period of what we may call cheerful religion, in which faith, love, hope, heaven, are the prevailing themes. There is sunlight in the church; at the domestic altar there are smiling hearts. Only here and there do we feel that it is necessary to let the shadows fall, to put sadness into our faces and dolor into our



voices. The descendants of Eliphaz and Bildad and Zophar are still abroad, and it does sometimes seem that they are determined to break the patience of every poor Job with their dolorous moralizing. "I wonder," says Miss Phelps, "who invented that most exquisite inquisition, the condolence system." I do not complain of offered sympathy, but the flavor that is given it. It is not a good way to drone about misfortune, to expatiate on loss and suffering. If you want to carry real help to one when unfortunate, point him forward. Minister to your sick with cheerful faces; let hope be in your speech, and courage in your eye; keep their eyes in the direction where the light dwelleth. Comfort the sorrowing in like manner, not with mournful pity, but with cheerful assurance; comfort cheerily, not gloomily. Pity! Pity your baby when it gets a bump, but speak to the courage of a man.

Learn then, good friends, the way where the light dwelleth; and through all the harder experiences of life look thitherward. Doubt it not, doubt it not, that for every shadow there must be a sunshine: and on the cloudiest and rainiest days look thitherward and you shall see that your cloud is arched by the bright bow of eternal promise. Believe it, it is only by the light we live. Darkness, doubt, despair, are

the sombre hues of the realm of death, and trust not your feet to enter there. This hard experience, this sorrow, this pain, this loss, ugly to look at, held up to the light may give us visions of gladness as we look through. Aye, they may be to us as the cathedral-window looking out through which the light shall come to us in mellow beauty and transfiguring joy.



**THE HEART'S PLEA FOR IMMOR-  
TALITY.**





## THE HEART'S PLEA FOR IMMORTALITY.

---

My heart is inditing a good matter. — PSALM xiv. 1.

The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God. Their hope is full of immortality. — WISDOM OF SOLOMON iii. 1-4.

SOMETHING less than three quarters of a century ago, the poet Shelley was drowned off the coast of Italy. His body was washed ashore a few miles north of Leghorn, and was taken charge of by three friends, Lord Byron, Leigh Hunt, and Trelawney, afterwards his biographer. There on the sands washed by the blue Mediterranean, with the islands of Gorgona and Elba lying in the sunlight before, and the "marble-crowned Apennines" in the background, was performed a rite of which paganism furnished the suggestion. Wood was gathered and built into a funeral pyre, as would have been done in the brave old classic days. The body was then drawn from the sand that lay lightly over it, and placed naked upon the pyre. Wine and oil were then poured

reverently upon it, which dripping down saturated the wood, and the fire was kindled. By the wine and oil the heat was made intense, and the very atmosphere was "tremulous and wavy with the quivering flame." In a short time all that was mortal of Shelley was reduced to ashes. No, not all. As these friends removed the smouldering embers, and picked out the few pieces of charred and crumbly bone that remained, a discovery was made which may incline the least sentimental of us to reverie. In that fierce heat which consumed everything else, the *heart remained entire*.

Were I to speak of Shelley, I might find a certain prophecy in this: a text, at least, to show how he—that wondrous but erratic genius, passionately, almost madly at war with the faiths, and I might add the virtues of his time, yet pouring out a melody to which an enchanted world must pause and listen: on the one side of his nature, the half-frenzied assailant of whatever man holds most sacred, and on the other, like his own singing and soaring skylark—has fared at the hands of his fellow-men. In the fierce heats of half a century of criticism, heats that have burned away everything else, the heart of Shelley remains. His dark philosophy, his wild despair, his career so erratic and so melancholy, we pass over as we

may, and forget as we can. But the deep utterances of his inspired soul have taken place with air and sunshine and the light of stars, — things that must be forever.

It is not of Shelley, however, that I wish to speak. My thought this morning hovers over the old faith in Immortality. The incident I have narrated seems a text, too, for that. The doctrine comes to us from what varied sources ! It is practically universal. Savagery has hardly ever been found too low for it ; civilization never too high. The North American Indian looks forward to his happy hunting grounds ; the Northmen dream of a Valhalla of the brave ; the old Greeks kindled into raptures at thought of Elysium ; the Moham-medan conquerors went to battle with assurance that Paradise was under the shadow of swords. It is a belief of the weak, the ignorant, the vulgar ; likewise of the strong, the wise, the great. Plato affirmed it in immortal periods ; Socrates died with it upon his lips ; Cicero was never more eloquent than in its advocacy ; Marcus Antoninus gave no better summary of his most vital faith than when he said, "It were well to die if there be gods ; and sad to live if there be none." Sages of all times, philosophers, poets, orators, men of action, men of science, the sincerest, deepest, strongest,

## 142. *THE HEART'S PLEA FOR IMMORTALITY.*

holiest, bravest, divergent enough as to everything else, have come together on the platform of this faith. Some one shall tell you that science to-day disproves immortality; in ignorance whereof he affirms, as I apprehend. How is it that men of science, kindled with its spirit, instructed in its methods, leading the van in every field of research, inquisitive, fearless, and evermore true, are yet unfaltering believers in immortality? The forms in which the doctrine comes are wonderfully varied; sometimes so gross you would not touch it; sometimes so phantom-like and ethereal you cannot grasp it. Sometimes, too, the arguments for the faith are so fanciful as to appear ridiculous; sometimes looking fair, they pulverize like lumps of sand when you lay hold upon them; often so subtle and far-fetched that, though you have no logic to dispute, your heart is in nowise comforted or assured by them. But all this signifies what? That the form may be misconceived; that the arguments are invalid; not that the faith is untenable. Often enough has immortality been disproved, or thought to be so. By the shore of every sea, under the shadow of every mountain, and in the heart of every civilization, has its funeral pyre been raised, and it, a beautiful corpse, as has been supposed, laid thereon. But as men have

watched the flame, something phoenix-like and beautiful has risen and hovered over it. The faith has come forth from the holocaust purified and regnant, only fairer, more absorbing, more sustaining, controlling, enthralling, offering sweeter consolations, quickening nobler incentives, fostering diviner longings. Men have stood by the pyre, and as they have seen the texture of various argument resolved into its original smoke and ashes, they have supposed all consumed. As they have stooped to prove the thoroughness of their work, however, they have been startled to find the heart intact remaining; the heart wherein are the ultimate springs of conviction, and which no heats of argument have even so much as scorched; the heart whose native longings no science can stifle, no philosophy can supplant, that holds on to the faith when the body of doctrine is burned away. So it has always been and is. Tell men of philosophy, and their practical answer is, *My heart is my philosopher.* Tell them their faith is not according to reason. Then will I cherish it in the face of reason, in substance their audacious and uncompromising reply.

Not always, not always thus; though almost always, it must in deference to exact truth be said. Some there have always been to whom immortality has not borne the common charm;

some who have felt like the child who, told of life without end, replied: "What, will it never stop? what, never die? never, never? it makes me feel so tired." And Emerson tells of one who once said to him: "The thought that this frail being is never to end, is so overwhelming that my only shelter is in God's presence." And Shelley it was, who in his lament for Keats, whom he dearly loved, arguing for annihilation in lines lofty as any literature can show, affirmed that, —

"The One remains, the many change and pass;  
Heaven's light forever shines, earth's shadows fly;  
Life, like a dome of many colored glass,  
Stains the white radiance of eternity,  
Until Death tramples it to fragments."

Which was the end and consummation he looked to. These exceptions, however, only suggest how prevailing is the rule. The great human heart, in its prophetic longings, hopes, aspirations, refuses to accept death as a finality. Rather with Tennyson, looking back upon memory and experience, mankind would say:

†

"If e'er when faith has fall'n asleep,  
I heard a voice, 'believe no more,'  
And heard an ever-breaking shore  
That tumbled in the Godless deep;

"A warmth within the breast would melt  
The freezing reason's colder part,

And like a man in wrath the heart  
Stood up and answered, '*I have felt.*'"

Well, what of it? Something, were I disposed to argue, which I am not, which should make skepticism think longer than is its wont, ere it made reply. This grand faith, hope, longing of man, so widely extended, so persistent, so defiant, requires explanation. Were it the speculation of some philosopher in Greece or Rome, some priest in Egypt, some rabbi in Judea; were it the belief merely of a sect, a tribe, a nation, of the wise alone of mankind, or of the foolish only, we might set it aside as a surmise, or guess, or whim, or conceit, or fancy, — a philosopher's toy, a young man's dream, an old woman's fable. But the conviction and animating faith of man, under every zone, in every longitude, and through all periods of history, haunting the imagination of the savage, and enchanting the reveries of Plato, Bacon, Dante, Shakespeare, Newton, Kant, Faraday, Emerson, — scholars, thinkers, bards, sages, prophets, and all degrees and conditions between, it wears another look. To explain the persistence and universality of this faith, Theodore Parker used to say that immortality is written upon the constitution of man by God, "who tells no lies." You object to this. Well then, come back to the lowest con-



ceivable theory of the origin of man, and say with the materialist that he is the creation of the universe. Then I boldly hold the universe responsible for its handiwork. Light, our evolutionists now tell us, formed the eye; a mere point in a sensitive nerve in the first place, light, by its action upon it, formed it into this wondrous organ of vision. In like manner, sound formed the ear. And whence these inner senses, faculties, powers, but from this same universe? I am arguing from the materialists' standpoint, not my own. Whence this constant and ineradicable desire, this divination of immortality? The universe, I trust we all agree, tells no lies. When you hold in your hand a coin whereon are certain figures, you know that in the die that stamped it, are other figures answering to them. If what is essentially and potentially of me is of the universe, then the universe is but another die.<sup>1</sup> From all that is in me I argue irresistibly to a correspondence that is without me. The faith of the universe is pledged to my immortality.

Shadowy is this, you say; well, shadows have a meaning in them. When that daring navigator, Magellan, essayed to circumnavigate the globe, it was under the guidance of a

<sup>1</sup> For the suggestion of this and the following illustration, I wish to confess indebtedness to Rev. M. J. Savage.

shadow. The telescope had told him in an eclipse of the moon that the earth's shadow was a cone. But as he reasoned and experimented, he saw that only a sphere could cast such a shadow. The earth, then, must be such a sphere; and he launched boldly upon the untried deep to demonstrate what the shadows revealed to him. With like confidence may we go down to that other deep, assured that this shadow is of an eternal substance, and cannot, cannot deceive us.

I have asserted the heart as the never silenced witness to this faith, as audaciously asserting it against whatever opposes. Let me indulge in a little analysis right here; brief, very brief, as it needs must be, and all inadequate, I fear.

It seems to me the mere instinctive desire for life, strong as it is, could never have given birth to the conviction of immortality. If we were but higher animals, as we are sometimes graciously told we are, we might shrink at death, flee from it, baffle it, contend with it while we could; but never should we meet it with assurance that it is but a passage-way or transition to some other and nobler life. In a low stage of this human animalism, dreams and shadows might awaken superstitions, as dreams and shadows have done, and give a

haunting sense of a ghostly something that survives the grave. But these would all part with their significance in the light of advancing intelligence. Did we, even with the intellectual organization that we have, lead a merely outward life; were we only toilers in mines, workers with plow and spade, builders of houses, sailors, bankers, traders; did we deal only with material interests and material forces, though outwardly we became great and powerful; though as conquerors we devastated and dazzled; though as lawgivers we ruled; though we piled achievement on achievement, built cities, tunneled mountains, spanned continents with railways, and whitened every sea with commerce; though heroes of the intellect arose, and Aristotles and Newtons and Herschels and Darwins explored all nature, and laid bare her wonders, — immortality as a speculation might then interest the leisure of some thinker, perhaps be appealed to, to flatter the vanity of some ruler, but would not be one of the vital and practical faiths of man. It is when an inward life is lived that men become believers in immortality; when turning within, they pronounce the great words, love, justice, virtue, holiness. With these they seem to come in contact with that which, in its very nature and essence, is eternal, and which, therefore, seems

to set upon the soul the very seal and guarantee of immortality. Love, justice, virtue, other qualities, no doubt, but these especially. Love refuses to accept death; justice reaches beyond the grave; virtue overtowers mortality. All together, they give the nature a sense of partaking even now in eternity, and so a standing place from which to assert immortality. Take them away, and all they imply, and immortality, as a common destiny of man, were not even a dream; no, not even a dream of a dream.

Love, that is the first great, all-persuasive appeal; the stubborn and unrelenting protest against death. The disbelievers in immortality are most commonly those whose lives are mainly outward. I say commonly, for while I lay down the rule I remember that the exceptions are many; those who deal chiefly with material things, or whose interests and sympathies are prevailingly worldly. And accordingly we may see the remedy which nature in such multitudes of instances provides. Many a man all immersed in the world is called home to himself and charmed into faith through some of those tenderer experiences by which the inward nature is quickened and awakened. Skeptical as to all creeds, callous to all appeals, it is at the side of the woman to whom he plights

his love that he becomes conscious of that within himself that takes hold on eternity; at the cradle of his babe where he gazes on the new Messiah that both preaches the kingdom of heaven and brings it to his heart; in some sacred enclosure, where, at the open grave, he looks up and sees heaven open too; and there a beckoning form, to which he cries, "Thou didst love me, my darling, and thou couldst not die." Love may not satisfy the intellect, as a demonstration, but it does satisfy many a heart as an experience; for it seems in its essence eternal, and who shall say it is not so? And especially in the sorrowing hours is it wont to seem so. I bear not in mind the consolations of grief, the seeking of which may often warp us, no doubt. I bear in mind the fact that those who have walked side by side in love cannot feel that at the grave that love is cancelled. The cord that bound their lives is lengthened, not severed. The mother, leaving there what was mortal of her child, feels that it is her child still. The wife, weeping there for the husband of her youth, hears as an angel whisper, *Thy Lord is risen.*

"But tell us, thou bird of the solemn strain,  
Can those who have loved forget?  
We call, but they answer not again,  
Do they love, do they love us yet?"

We call them far through the silent night,  
And they speak not from cave or hill;  
We know, we know that their land is bright,  
But say, do they love there still?"

Such is the question wrung out of human hearts in all the ages, and but one answer will be accepted. Tell me not of the obscuration of faith. Feeble intellects may be vanquished or confounded, but the heart is true to its own, and will not be vanquished. While love is a ruling sentiment of the heart, immortality will be the persuasive word.

I speak of justice. The sense of this is traced upon the nature of man by God, or the universe, as you will; a sense that weighs, measures, judges, pleads, and registers appeal. It is not like gravity, an attribute of matter; nor like intellect, a function of mind: it is the all-persuasive law of the moral nature; the law, too, by which we feel that the very universe must be founded. By its possession man seems to transcend space and time, and to take part already in eternity. And this sense is very dear to him. Often his sight is dimmed that he may not see; his will is perverted; his appetites enslave; his passions are his master. But even then, in his lowest and basest, his heart is outraged at the insult offered justice; is filled and dilated at the vision of its triumphs.

Now that this sense has a right to bear testimony on this question, has been the view of the greatest and the deepest who have ever thought upon it. Because eternal in its essence, when its verdict is clearly given it seems conclusive and oracular. In its light, men look out upon the world and demand that wrongs be righted, and inequalities balanced. They see that they cannot be here, and the justice within them cries out for a future where they may be.

Now you shall hear men say they care not for immortality. This life is beautiful and sufficing. It seems to me it is only with narrow view, and, on the whole, somewhat selfish, that they can say this. The deep sense of justice, for the time, seems to me smothered, or at least forgotten. I can conceive a man in tranquil mind saying this for himself. But to say it for others, at least for some others, seems to me hardly less than cruel. I have sometimes felt content with the world, that I have had my share. Temptations I have met; but I have known the pride of resisting them. Hard duties have been laid upon me, and I have tasted the luxury of doing them. Crosses have been placed upon my shoulders, and I have had the manly joy of bearing them. The sweeter cup has been offered to my lips; wife, children,

friends dear and beautiful have been given me. My eyes have been open to the vision of the world, and I have thrilled to its beauty. In some high hour of satisfaction you may call me to the fact of my mortality, may point me to earth and remind me that

"There lies my chamber, dark and still :  
The atoms trampled by my feet  
There wait to take the place I fill  
In the sweet air and sunshine sweet."

And I will answer :

"Well, I have had my turn, have been  
Raised from the darkness of the clod,  
And for a glorious moment seen  
The brightness of the skirts of God."

And I have no complaint to offer. Not, primarily for myself could this sense of justice ask for immortality; no, not for you in your homes of peace and beauty; not you doing duties well and bearing crosses manfully. I could ask it for you, but not primarily. My first and strongest appeal for it is when I meet that vagrant child; when I contemplate the harlot in her shame, the denizen of jail or prison; when in some city I am brought in contact with squalid vice and misery; when in ten thousand forms I encounter blighted, stunted, and dishonored lives. Poor souls! poor souls! I could cry: You have not had



your share. Heaven grant that whatever may be for me, for you at least may be opportunity to taste the joy of being noble. Their blighted and perverted lives demand another life, where under fairer conditions they may know their rightful beauty; and I thank God for the conviction within me that his justice cannot let them perish. I ask not for their ease, in the lower and poorer sense, their happiness. I rather ask, and this much the sense of justice demands, that they may have opportunity to climb to manhood. Strange it has sometimes seemed to me that the thought of men should so often have given immortality to the good, who need it comparatively so little, and withheld it from the bad, to whose rightful discipline it is so indispensable. Lay the emphasis the other way, if either. Withhold it from thy saints, O Lord, but give it, O give it to thy sinners! Should we not put up the prayer of the Persian Sadi: "O God, have pity on the wicked, for thou hast done everything for the good in having made them good"?

I have spoken of virtue, that divinizing power, by which men in face of odds often appalling hold fast to the regnancy of their spirits. That they can achieve great things in the material world, that they can show stupendous achievement of the intellect, are facts

we dwell upon with admiration and wonder. Nay, we often feel that such greatness in itself argues something in man not vulnerable to the shaft of death ; something not of the earth earthy, but of the Lord from heaven ; that there is something almost grotesque in the supposition that the intellect that sways and directs these elemental forces should be their outcome and their buffet ; that the mind that weighs the sun and spans the orbits of the planets should be less enduring than their primal law. From such considerations, however, I turn with the feeling that weighty as in themselves they are, they are trifling and ephemeral, set over against the fact that man in the exaltation of his moral nature against himself can make choice with God ; can take the bitter cup of renunciation and drink it all ; can elect failure, pain, loss at the behest of truth, for the excellence of virtue. Here we come to that which seems to me an attribute of something more than a merely earthly nature. Accordingly when I am looking through human achievement for witness to immortality, I turn not to the deeds of statesmen or sages. I turn rather to the examples of conspicuous endurance. I read the lesson in the flames that girdle Huss and Ridley ; I meet it in the prison at Athens, in the amphitheatre at Rome ; in the

dungeons of the Inquisition. I kindle with the faith before the example of those outwardly all defeat, inwardly victorious. And so men have ever done. Always have they felt that virtue triumphant should vanquish the grave.

Do you feel the force of this consideration? To me it has vast significance. I cannot stand in the presence of conspicuous virtue without feeling that in its essence it has naught to do with time, that by it the individual is lifted out of relation with mere mortal existence. Beasts suffer what they must; man at the behest of virtue can freely elect any ignominy or suffering or sorrow. Here is the supreme fact of the nature, a quality that demarcates it from every other nature of which this world is the theatre. You talk of the Resurrection as proof of immortality; I look to the Crucifixion and the spirit that could take it. Such spirit forever extinguished? Impossible! Dearer witness to me is Good Friday than Easter morn. The latter is legend, which on the evidence I may believe; the former appeals to me as witnessing the sublimer possibilities of human nature, in which I may partake. This thought often occurs to me in relation to the sensible demonstrations of immortality which many to-day suppose they have. The mysteries of the seance, the trances, the table-tip-

pings, and the rest, — seems to me that multitudes who believe in these might turn to their own self-denying virtues and find argument for immortality more assured.

I am aware how weak the sentiments of the heart seem as arguments when translated into the dialect of the intellect. As I have enumerated them, however, I have spoken of things that in their practical significance and power are mighty, and in the consideration of this theme they insist on being heard. It is from the constitution, functions, powers of the interior nature that men must reason on this theme. These are the more direct and essential witnesses, and their testimony, if not dogmatic and positive, is at least assuring. The greatest that have ever lived have thought so. Plato weighed it and believed; Goethe weighed it and believed; Newton weighed it and believed; Wordsworth weighed it and believed; Coleridge weighed it and believed; Emerson weighed it and believed; Faraday weighed it and believed; Agassiz weighed it and believed. That which wears eternal attributes, they have said, must be in its nature eternal.

As men's thoughts are turned much on these internal forces, are they likely to believe in immortality. As they live by them, as they take them into their lives, the shaping and control-

ling power, does belief become abiding and skepticism seem impossible. The saints of the world, — the obedient, reverent, loving, aspiring, praiseful, of whatever age or people, have rarely been disbelievers in immortality. In no small measure does the faith seem to me a fruition of our nobler endeavor, the exceeding great reward of virtue and piety. Rise higher, take on the saintlier character and more praiseful spirit, and dream solidifies into belief, belief deepens into faith, faith broadens into vision, vision kindles into rapture. Hence the weight to us of the great words of assurance of those who have reached the fairer summits of excellence, and who speak with a wisdom born not of thought only, but of holiness, — prophets, seers, sages, with souls refined and sanctified, their words have oracular power. Listen to the high, to the higher, to the highest, and in proportioned scale of emphasis is this true; until at last at the summit of humanity we listen to one, — son of man, son of God, was he? one whose speech informed of heaven, as it has seemed, has fallen upon the world, the very oracle of promise. “In my father’s house are many homes; I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.” Ever-

more heaven is wide open to the heavenly.<sup>1</sup>  
The pure in heart already see God.

With exceptions here and there, none the less it holds true, as I have said, that the skeptics on this theme are mainly with those whose interests are in material things, and those whose interior life is low. The punishment of neglect of vision is eclipse of faith. Be heavenly, if you will have the heavenly vision. Some are troubled by arguments, for reason is not equal to the high task here laid upon it. You doubt. I too have doubted; but always at some ebb-tide of my spirit, or when I have looked in the wrong place for conviction, to the experiments of science, to the demonstrations of logic, and not to the witnesses within my breast. It is when I turn within that I take courage to believe. Science may deal with the things of science; spirit must witness to the things of spirit. Logic may fail, science may fail; but love, justice, virtue, as forces of the common nature, abide forever. Proofs may be discredited, systems may pass away, but the heart remains. Philosophies may be given up, theologies passed by; but the soul in its exaltation shall see and know. Love, justice, virtue abide; and through the thrill of these comes the assured faith and the sufficing vision.















